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**COLLECTION**  
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**TAUCHNITZ EDITION.**

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**VOL. 1155.**  
**CHANDOS BY OUIDA**  
**IN TWO VOLUMES.**  
**VOL. 1.**

**LEIPZIG: BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ.**

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VOL. 1155.

CHANDOS BY OUIDA.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

"God and Man and Hope abandon me,  
But I to them and to myself remain constant."

SHELLEY.

"Treason doth never prosper. What's the reason?  
Why, when it prospers, none dare call it treason."

SIR JOHN HARRINGTON.

# CHANDOS.

A NOVEL.

BY

OUIDA,

AUTHOR OF "IDALIA," "TRICOTRIN," "PUCK."

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1871.

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# C H A N D O S.

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## PROEM.

### T W O V O W S.

IT was the sultry close of a midsummer night in the heart of London.

In all the narrow streets about Westminster there were the roar of traffic and the glare of midnight; the throngs were jostling each other, the unscreened gas-jets of the itinerant stalls were flaring yellow in the stillness of the air, the screaming of ballad-singers pierced shrilly above the incessant noise of wheels, the shouting of costermongers, butchers, oyster-vendors, and fried-fish-sellers added its uproar to the pandemonium, and the steam and stench of hot drinks and of rotting vegetables was blent with the heaviness of smoke borne down by the tempestuous oppression of the night. Above, the sky was dark; but across the darkness now and then a falling star shot swiftly down the clouds—in fleeting memento and reminder of all the glorious world of forest and of lake, of rushing river and of deep fern-glade, of leafy shelter lying cool in mountain-shadows, and of sea-waves breaking upon wet brown rocks, which were forgotten here, in the stress of trade, in the strife of crowds, in the cramped toil of poverty, and in the wealth of mingled nations.

Few in town that night looked up at the shooting star as it flashed its fiery passage above the dull, leaden, noxious, gas-lit streets; none, indeed, except perhaps here

and there a young dreamer, with threadbare coat and mad but sweet ambitions for all that was impossible—or some woman, young, haggard, painted, half drunk, whose aching eyes were caught by it, and whose sodden memory went wearily back to a long-buried childhood, when the stars were out over the moorland of a cottage home, and her childish wonder had watched them rise over the black edge of ricks through the little lozenge of the lattice, and sleep had come to her under their light, happily, innocently, haunted by no terrors, to the clear music of a mother's spinning-song. Save these, none thought of the star as it dropped down above the jagged wilderness of roofs: the crowd was looking elsewhere—to the lighted entrance of the Lower House.

The multitude had gathered thickly. There had been, as it was known, a powerful and heated debate, a political crisis of decisive eminence—of some peril, moreover, to the country, from a rash war policy urged upon the existing ministry, which must, it had been feared, have resigned to escape stooping to measures forced on it by the opposition. The false position had been avoided by the genius of one man alone; the government had stood firm, and had vanquished its foes, through the mighty ability of its chief statesman—one who, more fortunate than Pitt in the brilliant success of his measures at home and abroad, was often called, like Pitt, the Great Commoner.

Yet it was a title, perhaps, that scarcely suited him; for he was patrician to the core—patrician in pride, in name, in blood, and in caste, though he disdained all coronets. You could not have lowered him; also, you could not have ennobled him. He was simply and intrinsically a great man. At the same time, he was the haughtiest of aristocrats—too haughty ever to stoop to the patent of a present earldom or a marquise of the new creation.



The crowds pressed closest and densest as one by one his colleagues appeared, passing to their carriages; and his name ran breathlessly down the people's ranks: they trusted him, they honoured him, they were proud of him, as this country, so naturally and strongly conservative in its instincts, however radical it be in its reasonings, is proud of its aristocratic leaders. They were ready to cheer him to the echo the moment he appeared; specially ready to-night, for he had achieved a signal victory, and the populace always cense success.

At last he came—a tall and handsome man, about fifty years of age, and with a physiognomy that showed both the habit and the power of command. He was satiated to weariness with public homage; but he acknowledged the greetings of the people as they rang on the night air with a kindly, if negligent, courtesy—the courtesy of a *grand seigneur*.

At his side was a boy, his only son, a mere child of some seven years. Indulged in his every inclination, he had been taken to the House that evening by a good-natured peer, to a seat under the clock, and had for the first time heard his father speak—heard, with his eyes glittering, and his cheeks flushed, and his heart beating, in passionate triumph and enthusiastic love.

“That boy will be a great man, if—if he don't have too much genius,” the old peer who sat beside him had said to himself, watching his kindling eyes and breathless lips, and knowing, like a world-wise old man of business as he was, that the fate of Prometheus is the same in all ages, and that it is Mediocrity which pays.

The boy had a singular beauty; it had been a characteristic of the race through centuries; woman's fashionable fancies were shown in the elegance of his dress, with its velvets, and laces, and delicate hues; and the gold of his

hair, falling over his shoulders in long clustering curls, glittered in the lamp-light as, at his father's recognition of the crowd, he lifted his cap with its eagle's feather and bowed to them too—a child's bright, gratified amusement blent with the proud, courtly grace of his father's manner, already hereditary in him.

The hearts of the people warmed to him for his beauty and for his childhood, the hearts of the women especially, and they gave him another and yet heartier cheer. He bowed like a young prince to the right and to the left, and looked up in the grave statesman's face with a joyous laugh; yet still in his eyes, as they glanced over the throngs, there was the look, dreamy, brilliant, half wistful, half eager, which was beyond his age, and which had made the old peer fear for him, that gift of the gods which the world does not love, because—most unwisely, most suicidally—it fears it.

Amongst the crowd, wedged in with the thousands pressing there about the carriages waiting for the members, stood a woman: she was in mourning-clothes, that hung sombrely and heavily about her, and a dark veil obscured her features. Her features could not be seen, her eyes alone shone through the folds of her veil, and were fixed on the famous politician as he came out from the entrance of the Commons, and on the young boy by his side. Her own hand was on the shoulder of a child but a few years older, very strongly built, short, and muscularly made, with features of a thoroughly English type—that which is vulgarly called the Saxon; his skin was very tanned, his linen torn and untidy, his hands brown as berries and broad as a young lion's paws, and his eyes, blue, keen, with an infinite mass of humour in them, looked steadily out from under the straw hat drawn over them; they too were fastened on the bright hair and

the delicate dress of the little aristocrat, with some such look as, when a child, Manon Phlippon gave the gay and glittering groups of Versailles and the young Queen whom she lived to drag to the scaffold.

The woman's hand weighed more heavily on his shoulder, and she stooped her head till her lips touched his cheek, with a hoarse whisper,—

“There is your enemy!”

The boy nodded silently, and a look passed over his face, over the sturdy defiance of his mouth and the honest mischief of his eyes, very bitter, very merciless—worse in one so young than the fiercest outburst of evanescent rage.

Life was but just opening in him; but already he had learned man's first instinct—to hate.

Where they stood, on the edge of the pressing throng, that had left but a narrow lane for the passage of the ministers, the little patrician was close to the boy who stared at him with so dogged a jealousy and detestation in his glance, and his own eyes, with a wondering surprise, rested a moment on the only face that had ever looked darkly on him. He paused, the naturally generous and tender temper in him leading him, unconsciously, rather to pity and to reconciliation than to offence: he had never seen this stranger before, but his instinct was to woo him out of his angry solitude. He touched him with a bright and loving smile, giving what he had to give.

“You look vexed and tired: take these!”

He put into his hand a packet of French bonbons that had been given in the Ladies' Gallery, and followed his father, with a glad, rapid bound, into the carriage, by whose steps they were. The servants shut the door with a clash, the wheels rolled away with a loud clatter, swelling the thunder of the busy midnight streets. The boy

in the throng stood silent, looking at the dainty, costly, enamelled Paris packet of crystallised sweetmeats and fruits. Then, without a word, he flung it savagely on the ground, and stamped it out under his heel, making the painted, silvered paper, and the luscious bonbons, a battered, trampled mass, down in the mud of the pavement.

There was a world of eloquence in the gesture.

As his carriage rolled through the streets in the late night, the great statesman passed his hand lightly over the fair locks of his son. The child had much of his own nature, of his own intellect, and he saw in his young heir the future security for the continuance of the brilliance and power of his race.

"You will make the nation honour you for yourself one day, Ernest?" he said, gently.

There were tears in the child's eyes, and a brave and noble promise and comprehension in his face, as he looked up at his father.

"If I live I will!"

As they were propelled onward by the pressure of the moving crowd, the woman and her son went slowly along the heated streets, with the gas-flare of some fish or meat-shop thrown on them, as they passed, in yellow, flaring illumination. They were not poor, though on foot thus, and though the lad's dress was torn and soiled through his own inveterate activity and endless mischief. No pressure of any want was on them: yet his glance followed the carriages, darted under the awnings before the mansions, and penetrated wherever riches or rank struck him, with the hungry, impatient, longing look of a starving Rousseau or Gilbert, hounded to socialism for lack of a sou—a look very strange and premature on a face so young and naturally so mirthful and good-humoured.

His mother watched him, and leaned her hand again on his shoulder.

"You will have your revenge one day."

"*Won't I!*"

The school-boy answer was ground out with a meaning intensity, as he set his teeth like a young bulldog.

Each had promised to gain a very different *aristeia*. When they came to the combat, with whom would rest the victory?

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## BOOK THE FIRST.

### CHAPTER I.

Pythias, or Mephistopheles?

It was the height of the London season. Town filled. Death had made gaps in the crowd; but new-comers filled up the rents, and the lost were unmissed. Brows, that the last year had been stainless as snow, had been smirched with slander or stained with shame; but the opals crowning them belied their ancient fame, and did not pale. Light hearts had grown heavy, proud heads had been bent, fair cheeks had learned to cover care with pearl-powder, words had been spoken that a lifetime could not recall, links had been broken that an eternity would not unite, seeds of sin and sorrow had been sown never again to be uprooted, in the brief months that lay between "last season" and this phoenix of the new; but the fashionable world met again with smiling lips, and bland complaisance, and unutterable *ennui*, and charming mutual compliment, to go through all the old routine with well-trained faces, befitting the arena.

.. It was April. The last carriages had rolled out by

the Corner, the last hacks paced out of the Ride, the last sunlight was fading; epicures were reflecting on their club dinners, beauties were studying the contents of their jewel-boxes, the one enjoying a *matelote*, the other a conquest, in dreamy anticipation; chandeliers were being lit for political receptions, where it would be a three-hours' campaign to crush up the stairs; and members waiting to go in on Supply were improving their minds by discussing a new dancer's ankles, and the extraordinary scratching of Lord of the Isles for the Guineas. The West, in a word, was beginning its Business, which is Pleasure; while the East laid aside its Pleasure, which is Business; and it was near eight o'clock on a spring night in London.

Half a hundred entertainments waited for his selection; all the loveliest women, of worlds proper and improper, were calculating their chances of securing his preference; yet alone in his house in Park Lane, a man lay in idleness and ease, indolently smoking a narghilé from a great silver basin of rose-water.

A stray sunbeam lingered here and there on some delicate bit of statuary, or jewelled tazza, or Cellini cup, in a chamber luxurious enough for an imperial bride's, with its hangings of violet velvet, its ceiling painted after Greuze, its walls hung with rich Old Masters and *Petits Maîtres*, and its niches screening some group of Coysevox, Coustou, or Canova. It was, however, only the "study," the pet retreat of its owner, a collector and a connoisseur, who lay now on his sofa, near a table strewn with Elzevirs, Paris novels, MSS., croquis, before-letter proofs, and dainty female notes. The fading sunlight fell across his face as his head rested on his left arm. A painter would have drawn him as Alcibiades, or, more poetically still, would have idealised him into the Phœbus Lykêgenês, so singularly great was his personal beauty. A

physiognomist would have said, "Here is a voluptuary, here is a profound thinker, here is a poet, here is one who may be a leader and chief among men if he will;" but would have added, "Here is one who may, fifty to one, sink too softly into his bed of rose-leaves ever to care to rise in full strength out of it." Artists were chiefly attracted by the power, men by the brilliance, and women by the gentleness, of this dazzling beauty: for the latter, indeed, a subtler spell yet lay in the deep-blue, poetic, eloquent eyes, which ever gave such tender homage, such dangerous prayer, to their own loveliness. The brow was magnificent, meditative enough for Plato's; the rich and gold-hued hair, bright as any Helen's; the gaze of the eyes in rest, thoughtful as might be that of a Marcus Aurelius; the mouth, insouciant and epicurean as the lips of a Catullus. The contradictions in the features were the anomalies in the character. For the rest, his stature was much above the ordinary height; his attitude showed both the strength and grace of his limbs; his age was a year or so over thirty, and his reverie now was of the lightest and laziest; he had not a single care on him.

There was a double door to his room; he was never disturbed there, either by servants or friends, on any sort of pretext; his house was as free to all as a caravanserai, but to this chamber only all the world was interdicted. Yet the first handle turned, the second turned, the *portière* was tossed aside with a jerk, and the audacious newcomer entered.

"My dear Ernest! you alone at this time of the day? What a miracle! I have actually dared to invade your sanctum, your holy of holies; deuced pleasant place, too. What is it you do here? paint your prettiest picture, chip your prettiest statuette, make love to your prettiest mistress, write your novels, study occult sciences, meditate

on the Dialectics, seek the philosopher's stone, search for the Venetian colour-secret, have suppers *à la Régence* to which you deny even your bosom friends? or what is it? On my honour, I am very curious!"

"Tell me some news, Trevenna," said his host, with an amused smile, in a voice low, clear, lingering and melodious as music, contrasting forcibly with the sharp, ringing, metallic tones of his visitor. "How came you to come in here? You know——"

"I know; but I had curiosity and a good opportunity: what mortal, or what morals, ever resisted such a combination? I am weaker than a woman. No principle, not a shred. Am I responsible for that? No;—organisation and education. How dark you are here! May I ring for lights?"

"Do you want light to talk by?" laughed his friend, stretching his hand to a bell-handle. "Your tongue generally runs on oiled wheels."

"Of course it does. It's my trade to talk; I rattle my tongue as a nigger singer rattles his bones; I must chat as an organ-grinder grinds. I'm asked out to dine to talk. If I grew a bore, every creature would drop me; and if I grew too dull to get up a scandal, I should be very sure never to get a dinner. My tongue's my merchandise!"

With which statement of his social status, John Trevenna jerked himself out of his chair, and, while the groom of the chamber lighted the chandelier, strolled round the apartment. He was a man of six or eight-and-thirty, short, a little stout, but wonderfully supple, quick, and agile, a master of all the sciences of the gymnasium; his face was plain and irregular in feature, but bright, frank, full of good-humour almost to joviality, and of keen, alert, cultured intelligence, prepossessing through



its blunt and honest candour, its merry smile showing the strong white teeth, its *bonhomie*, and its look of acute indomitable *cleverness*,—a cleverness which is no more genius than an English farce is wit, but which, sharper than intellect alone, more audacious than talent alone, will trick the world, and throw its foes, and thrive in all it does, while genius gets stoned or starves. He loitered round the room, with his eye-glass up, glancing here, there, and everywhere, as though he were an embryo auctioneer, and stopped at last before a Daphne flying from Apollo and just caught by him, shrouded in rose-coloured curtains.

"Nice little girl, this! Rather enticing; made her look alive with that rose-light; tantalising to know it's nothing but marble; sweetly pretty, certainly."

"Sweetly pretty? Good heavens, my dear fellow, hold your tongue! One would think you a cockney adoring the moon, or a lady's maid a new fashion. That Daphne's the most perfect thing Coustou ever did."

"Don't know anything about them! Never see a bit of difference in them from the plaster casts you buy for a shilling. Won't break quite so soon, to be sure. She *is* pretty,—nice and round, and all that; but I don't care a straw about art. Never could."

"And you are proud of your paganism? Well, you are not the first person who has boasted of his heresy for the sheer sake of appearing singular."

"To be sure! I understand Wilkes: let me be the ugliest man in Europe, rather than remain in mediocrity among the medium plain faces. There's not a hair's difference between notoriety and fame. Be celebrated for something, and, if you can't jump into a pit like Curtius, pop yourself into a volcano like Empedocles: the foolery's immortalised just as well as a heroism; the world talks of you, that's all you want. If I couldn't be Alexander, I'd

be Diogenes; if I weren't a great hero, I'd be a most ingenious murderer. There's no radical difference between the two! But, I say, do you ever remember what a fearful amount you throw away on these dolly things?" pursued Trevenna, interrupting himself to strike his cane on the Daphne.

"The only things worth the money I spend! My dear Trevenna, I thank you much for your interest, but I can dispense with your counsels."

"Pardon! I'm a brusque fellow, and say what comes uppermost; wiser if I kept it sometimes. If you do live *en prince*, who wouldn't that could? I don't believe in renunciation. He is a shrewd fellow who, forced on abstinence, vows he likes it and says he does it for digestion, but I love the good things of life and say so, though I can't afford them. I should sell my soul for turtle soup! By the way, monseigneur, before we eat *your* soup, there's a little business——"

"Business? In the evening! Do you wish to give me dyspepsia before dinner?"

"No; but I want to digest mine by feeling I've done my duty. There's something we want you to sign; Legrew does, at the least——"

"On my honour, Trevenna," cried his host, with a gay, careless laugh, "you are abominable! How often have I told you that I trust you implicitly,—you are fit for Chancellor of the Exchequer,—and that I never will be worried by any nonsense of the kind?"

"But, *caro mio*," pleaded Trevenna, coaxingly, "we can't do without your signature. What's to be done? We can't give leases, and draw checks, and get bonds and mortgages, without your handwriting."

The last words caught the indolent listener's inattentive ear. He looked up surprised.

"Bonds? Mortgages? What can I possibly have to do with them?"

"Moneys are lent out on mortgages, I only used the words as example," explained his prime minister, a little rapidly. "We trouble you as little as we can; only want your name now. Remember, the Guineas let you in heavily this time, one can't transfer those large sums without your authorisation. Just let me read you over this paper, it's merely——"

"Spare me! spare me!" cried the lord of this dainty art-palace, to whom the ominous crackle of the parchment was worse than the singing of a rattlesnake. "Smindyrides felt tired if he saw a man at work in the fields, what would he have felt if he had seen a modern law document?"

"Just sign, and you won't see it any more," pleaded Trevenna, who knew the facile points of a character he had long made his special study, and knew that, to be saved farther expostulation, his chief would comply.

He did so, raising himself with slow, graceful indolence from his cushions, and resigning the mouth-piece of his hookah reluctantly. The compliance was most insouciant; the willingness to sign, in ignorance of what he signed, a trustful carelessness that was almost womanish. But life had fostered this side of his character, and had done nothing to counteract it.

"Stay! you haven't heard what it is," put in Trevenna, while he rattled off, with clear, quick precision that showed him a master of *précis* and would have qualified him to explain a budget in St. Stephen's, a *résumé* of what he stated the contents of the document to be; a very harmless document, according to him, merely reverting to the management of the immense properties of which his friend was the possessor. His hearer idly listened two minutes,

then let his thoughts drift away to the chiaroscuro of a Ghirlandajo opposite, and to speculation whether Reynolds was quite correct in his estimate of the invariable amount of shadow employed by the old masters.

Trevenna's exposition, lucid, brief, and as little tiresome as legalities can be made, ended, he took the pen without more opposition or reflection, and dashed his name down in bold, clear letters,—

“ERNEST CHANDOS.”

He pushed the paper to Trevenna with the ink still wet on the signature.

“There! and remember henceforward, my very good fellow, never to trouble me with all this nonsense again. I might as well manage my own affairs from first to last, if my men of business must come to me about every trifle. I would not trust the lawyers without looking after them (though if a lawyer mean to cheat you he *will*, let you have as many eyes as Argus), but with you to give them the check they can't go wrong. By the way, Trevenna, were you not touched on the Heath, yourself?”

“Well, Lord of the Isles let us all in, more or less,” said Trevenna, crumpling up his papers, “but, you know, poor hedgers like me can't ever risk more than a tenner or so.”

“Still, your inimitable book-making failed you at the Guineas? I was afraid so. Draw on me as you need: you have blank checks of mine; fill one up as you like.”

“No, no! oh, hang it, monseigneur! You put one out of countenance.”

“Impossible miracle, Trevenna!” laughed Chandos, looking on him with kindly eyes. “How can any little matter like that ever repay all the time and talent you are good enough to waste in my service? Besides, between old friends there is never a question of obligation.

Nine o'clock? We must go to dinner. I promised Claire Rahel not to miss her supper. She is enchanting! She has the *sourire de la Régence* and the wit of Sophie Arnould."

"And the smiles cost you an India of diamonds, and the wit is paid a cashmere each mot! If Monde deigned to recognise Demi-Monde, how would the Countess admire being outrivalled by the actress?"

"The Countess is like Crispin, *rivale de soi-même* alone. All pretty women and all dull men are vain! The belles and the bores always worship at their own shrines," laughed Chandos, as his groom of the chambers announced the arrival in the drawing-rooms of other guests from the Guards and the Legations, to one of those "little dinners" which were the most coveted and exclusive entertainments in London.

"We must go, I suppose; Prince Charles might wait, but the turbot must not," he said, with a yawn,—he was accustomed to have the world wait on and wait for him,—as he held back the *portière*, and signed to John Trevenna to pass out before him, down the lighted corridor, with its exotics, statues, and bronzes glancing under the radiance from the candelabra. He would have kept a Serene Highness attending his pleasure; but he gave the *pas* with as much courtesy as to a monarch to that very needed man-about-town, his dependent, hanger-on, and *fidus Achates*, John Trevenna.

## CHAPTER II.

"La Comète et sa Queue."

"DID you see Chandos' trap in the ring to-day? Four-in-hand greys, set of outriders, cream-and-silver liveries,—prettiest thing ever seen in the park," said Winters of the First Guards.

"Chandos has given six thousand for Wild Geranium,

—best bit of blood out of Danesbury; safe to win at the Ducal," said the Marquis of Bawood.

"Chandos has bought the Titians at the Duc de Valeré's sales; the nation ought to have bidden for them," said the Earl of Rougemont.

"Nation's much better off; he's given them to the country," said Stentor, a very great art-critic.

"You don't mean it?" said the Duke of Argentine. "That man would give his head away."

"And if the Cabinet bid for it they might keep in office," said George Lorn, who was a cynical dandy.

"Flora has been faithful three months. Chandos *is* a sorcerer!" yawned Sir Phipps Lacy, talking of a beautiful sovereign of the equivocal world.

"Chandos has a bottomless purse, my dear Sir Phipps; there's the key to Flora's new constancy," said John Trevenna.

"You have read 'Lucrece,' of course? There is no writer in Europe like Chandos,—such wit, such pathos, such power. I had the early sheets before it was published," said the Duchess of Belamour, proud of her privilege.

"'Lucrece' is the most marvellous thing since 'Pelham.'"

"The most poetic since Byron!"

"Oh, it is a poem in prose!"

"And yet such exquisite satire!"

"Alfred de Musset never probed human nature so deeply!"

"Shelley never attained more perfect art."

"Certainly not! you know it is in the sixth edition already!"

"Of course! every one is reading it."

So the talk ran round at a garden-party near Richmond, among the guests of a Bourbon prince, and for once the proverb was wrong, and the absent was found

by his friends in the right, with an universal vote of adoration. When the sun is at his noon, and they are basking in his light, the whole floral world turn after him in idolatry; if he ever set, perhaps they hang their heads, and hug the night-damp, and nod together in condemnation of the spots that dimmed their fallen god's beauty; they have never spoken of them before, but they have all seen them; and then the judicious flowers sigh a vote of censure.

He of whom the world chattered now was the darling of Fortune; his sins and stains, if he had any, were buried in oblivion, or only cited tenderly, almost admiringly, as a woman puts her diamonds on black velvet that their brilliance may be enhanced by the contrast. For to women he was the most handsome man of his day, and to men he was the leader of fashion and the donor of the best dinners in Europe. Friendship is never sealed so firmly as with the green wax of a pure claret, and our Patroclus is sacred to us after sharing his salt and his bread, at least if it flavour clear soup and be *pain à la mode*;—black broth and black bread might not have such sanctifying properties.

"How late you are!" cried the Countess de la Vivarol, making room for him beside her in a summer concert-room, as the idol of the hour appeared at last for half an hour in the prince's grounds. A fairer thing than this fairest of fashionable empresses was never seen at Long-champs on a great race-day, or in the Salle des Maréchaux at a reception; yet, such is the ingratitude or inconstancy of nature, Chandos looked less at her than at a strange face some distance from him, although he had for the last two years been no more rivalled near the charming Countess than if she had worn a silver label or a silver collar round her neck to denote his proprietorship.



like his retriever Beau Sire, or his pet deer down at Clarencieux. Madame noted the *lèse-majesté*: she was not a woman to forgive it, and still less a woman to complain of it.

"They are talking about 'Lucrèce,' Ernest. They worship it," she said, dropping her lovely, mellow, laughing, starlike eyes on him. They had fallen on him with effect, twenty months before, in the soft moonlight on a certain balcony at Compiègne.

He laughed. He cared little what the world said of him, he had ruled it too long to be its slave.

"Indeed! And—do they read it?"

"Yes. They *do* read *you*," laughed Madame, too, "though they would swear to you on hearsay just so warmly. All the world idolises the book."

"Ah! I would prefer half a dozen who could criticise it."

"*Tais-toi*. How ungrateful you are!"

"Because my head does not get turned? That was Sulla's worst crime to mankind. They say 'Lucrèce' is a masterpiece *because* it is in its fifth edition, and they expect me to be intoxicated with such discerning applause," said Chandos, with his melodious, amused laugh, clear and gay as a woman's. Fame had come to him so young, he had gained the world's incense with so little effort, that he held both in a certain nonchalant mockery.

"To be sure! when men go mad if they get one grain of applause, it is very discourteous in you to keep cool when you have a hundred. What a reflection it is upon them! Where are you looking, Ernest?"

"Where can I be looking?" he said, with a smile, as he turned his eyes full upon her. It would not have done to confess to the Countess that he was scarcely



heeding her words because a face rarer to him had caught his gaze in the fashionable crowd.

The Countess gave a little sceptical meaning arch of her delicate eyebrows. "She is very beautiful, *mon ami*, but her beauty will not do for you."

"Why?"

"Because the passage to it will be terrible," said Madame de la Vivarol, with a shiver of her perfumed laces. Her teeth were set in rage under the soft, laughing, rose-hued lips, but she could play her pretty, careless vaudeville without a sign of jealousy.

"Terrible! you pique my curiosity. I have no fondness, though, for tempests in my love affairs.

'En l'amour si rien n'est amer,  
Qu'on est sot de ne pas aimer !  
Si tout l'est au degré suprême,  
Qu'on est sot alors que l'on aime !'

Terrible, too? In what way?"

"*Par la porte du mariage*," said La Vivarol, with a silvery laugh.

Chandos laughed too, as he leaned over her chair.

"Terrible indeed, then. It were too much to pay for a Helen! You have disenchanted me at once; so tell me now who she is."

"Not I! I am not master of the ceremonies."

There was a certain dark, angry flush under the curl of her silky lashes that he knew very well.

"I am a little out of your favour to-day, Heloïse!" said Chandos, amusedly. The passing storm of a mistress's jealousy was the darkest passage his cloudless life had encountered. "I know my crime: I was not at your reception last night."

"Weren't you?" asked La Vivarol, with the most perfect air of indifferent surprise. "I could not tell who was and who was not. How I detest your English crushes!"

"Nevertheless, that was my sin," laughed Chandos. "What excuse can I make? If I tell you I was writing a sonnet in your name, you would tell me we solace ourselves more materially and unfaithfully. If I said I feared my thousand rivals, you would not be likely to believe that any more. There is nothing for it but the truth."

"Well, tell it, then."

"*Ma belle*, the truth will be that I was at Alvarina's *début* in *Rigoletto*, and supped afterwards with her and Rahel."

"Alvarina! that gaunt, brown Roman? and you call yourself fastidious, Ernest?" cried Madame la Comtesse.

"A gaunt, brown Roman,—Alvarina! The handsomest singer that ever crossed the Alps! So much for feminine prejudice," thought Chandos; but he knew the sex too well to utter his thoughts aloud.

"Pygmalion was nothing to you, Chandos," said Trevenna, swinging himself up the perch of the drag as a schoolboy up a tree, while the other men on it were owners of some of the highest coronets in Europe. There was this that was excellent and manly in this penniless man-upon-town; he never truckled to rank; peer or day-labourer alike heard his mind. "*He* put heart into a statue; *you've* put it into a woman of the world,—much the more difficult feat. Madame la Comtesse is positively jealous. I do believe she divines we are going to have Demi-Monde to dinner."

"Not she! she would not do me so much honour. But every woman has a heart, even the worst women,—though, to be sure, we forget it sometimes, till—we've broken them."

"Broken them? Poetic author of 'Lucrèce'! Hearts never break,—except as a good stroke of business, as

sculptors knock a limb off a statue to make believe it's an antique. Every Musette we neglect vows her desertion is her death, but she soon sings *Resurgam* again, to the tune of the Cancan at the opera-ball."

"So much the happier for them, for we give them no *De Profundis*! There are exceptions to the Musette rule, though. I remember——"

"Don't trouble yourself with remembrance, Ernest. She soon supplied your place, take my word for it."

"My good fellow, no: she died."

"Not out of love for you! She had aneurism, or disease of the heart, or sat in a draught and caught cold, or ate too many cherries after dinner! There was a substantial basis for your picturesque hypothesis, I'll wager."

"Graceless dog! Have you never had a doubled-down page in your life?"

"I don't keep a diary; not even a mental one! Reminiscence is utterly unpractical and unphilosophical: agreeable, it dissatisfies you with the present; disagreeable, it dissatisfies you with the past. I say, they are taking five to three on your chestnut at the Corner. I don't see what can beat you at Ascot. There's a good deal whispered about Lotus Lily: she's kept dark."

"They always train closely at Whitworth, but rarely bring out anything good. You are quite safe, Chandos," said His Grace of Ardennes, a gay, vivacious young fellow.

"Queen of the Fairies is the only thing that could have a chance with Galahad," put in the Duc de Luilhiers: "she has good breed in her by double strains; fine shoulders——"

"Leggy!" objected Trevenna, contemptuously, flatly contradicting a peer of France. "Not well ribbed-up; weedy altogether. Chieftain was her sire, and he never did anything notable except to break a blood-vessel on

the Beacon Course. The touts know what they're about, and they're all for the Clarencieux horse."

"Galahad will win if he be allowed," said Chandos. "Ah! there is Flora on the balcony; they are before us."

"I wish they weren't here at all!" cried Trevenna. "You should never have women to dinner; they shouldn't come till the olives. You can't appreciate the delicate *nuances* of a flavour if you are obliged to turn a compliment while you are eating it; and you never can tell whether a thing is done to a second, if, as you discuss it, you are pondering on the handsome flesh-tints of a living picture beside you. The presence of a woman disturbs that cool, critical acumen, that serene, divine beatitude, that should attend your dinner."

"Blasphemer!" cried Chandos. "As if one touch of some soft lips were not worth all Brillat-Savarin's science; what flavour would wine have if women's eyes didn't laugh over it? You King of Epicures! you'd adore a Vitellius, I believe, and hang Pausanias for his Spartan broth!"

"Certainly. A man who could capture Xerxes's cooks and not dine off their art deserved nothing less than the gallows; and Vitellius was a very sensible fellow; when he knew he must die he took care to finish his wine first. Hero *versus* Gourmet. Why not? Carême benefited France much more lastingly than Turenne; and Ude's done the world far more good than Napoleon. I'd rather have been the man who first found out that you must stuff a turkey with truffles than have won Austerlitz, any day. Your hero gets misjudged, blackguarded, whitewashed, over-rated, under-rated, just as the fit's hot or cold to him; but the man who once invents a perfect sauce is secure for all eternity. His work speaks for itself, and its judges are his apostles, who never name him without benediction. Besides, fancy the satisfaction to a cosmopolitan, amiable

creature like myself, of knowing I'd prepared a delight for generations unborn!"

"Sublime apotheosis of gastronomy!" laughed Chandos, as he threw the ribbons to his groom before the doors of a summer villa at Richmond belonging to him, where most of these Bohemian dinners and suppers *à la Régence* were given, a charming place, half-covered in flowering trees and pyramids of May blossom; with glimpses of wood and water from its windows, and with the daintiest and cosiest banqueting-room in the world, hung with scarlet silk, drawn back here and there to show some beautiful female picture by Titian, Greuze, Regnault, or La Tour, large enough to hold twenty people, but small enough to feel *à huis clos* like a cabinet; with the air scented by dreamy incenses, and dishes and wines under the mellowed light that would have entranced even Lucullus had he been throned there on his ivory chair. Of this villa, and this banqueting-room, rumour ran high, accrediting its revelries as wild as Medmenham or as Bussy-Rabutin's "Abbey" of Roissy. They who told most precisely what positively took place there were, of course, always those who had never been through its doors! And the world loved to take their stories with spice, and whisper unimaginable naughtiness of this pleasant *bon-bonnière* of a villa buried away in its acacias and guelder roses and flowering chestnuts, where laughter rang out on to the young summer dawns, and beauty in *négligé* outshone all the jewelled beauty of courts.

"The art of life is—to enjoy!" cried Chandos, that night, lifting up to crown the sentiment a deep glass of glowing red Roussillon.

"Toast worthy of Lucullus and Ovid! and you are a master of the science," said John Trevenna, who was perhaps the only one who saw quite clearly through that

intoxicating atmosphere of pastilles, and perfumes, and wines, and crushed flowers, and bruised fruits, and glancing tresses, and languid eyes, and lips fit for the hymns of a Catullus.

"He is the darling of the gods!" cried Flora de l'Orme, that magnificent Arlésienne, with her cheek like a peach in the sun, while she leaned over him and twisted, in the bright masses of his golden hair, a wreath of crimson roses washed in purple Burgundy.

Chandos shook the wine from the rose-crown as he bent and kissed that glowing Southern loveliness, and laughed under his diadem of flowers. The roses themselves were not brighter or more luxurious than the hours of life were to him.

*He enjoyed!* Oh, golden sum of this world's sweet content! Supreme truth of Faust; when he should

"To the passing moment say,  
Stay! thou art so fair!"

then alone the philosopher knew that he could claim to have tasted happiness. When once we look back or look forward, then has the trail of the serpent been over our Eden. To enjoy, we must live in the instant we grasp.

It is so easy for the preacher, when he has entered the days of darkness, to tell us to find no flavour in the golden fruit, no music in the song of the charmer, no spell in eyes that look love, no delirium in the soft dreams of the lotus—so easy when these things are dead and barren for himself, to say they are forbidden! But men must be far more, or far less, than mortal ere they can blind their eyes, and dull their senses, and forswear their nature, and obey the dreariness of the commandment; and there is little need to force the sackcloth and the serge upon us. The roses wither long before the wassail is over, and there is no magic that will make them bloom again, for

there is none that renews us—youth. The Helots had their one short, joyous festival in their long year of labour; life may leave us ours. It will be surely to us, long before its close, a harder tyrant and a more remorseless taskmaster than ever was the Lacedemonian to his bond-slaves,—bidding us make bricks without straw, breaking the bowed back, and leaving us as our sole chance of freedom the hour when we shall turn our faces to the wall—and die.

Once, some twenty years or more before, down at the stately pile of Clarencieux, in the heart of the Devon woods, Philip Chandos, the great minister, had paused a moment where his young son leaned out of one of the painted oriel casements of the library, hanging with a child's faith and love over the eternal story of Arthur. The boy's arms were folded on the vellum pages, his head was drooped slightly forward in dreamy thought, and on his face came the look that there is in the portrait of Milton in his early years.

His father touched him on the shoulder.

"Where are your thoughts, Ernest?"

The child started a little.

"I was thinking what I shall be when I am a man."

"Indeed? And what will you be?"

"First, Chandos of Clarencieux!"

He could not have spoken with air more royal if he had said, "Augustus Imperator!"

"But besides?"

"Besides?" his voice fell lower, and grew swift and warmer, a little tremulous in its enthusiasm. "Why, I will be a poet and a statesman. I will have palaces like the Arabian Nights, and gather the people in them and make them happy. I will defend all the guiltless and protect all the weak, like King Arthur. I will rule

men, but by love, not fear; and I will make my name great,—so great that when I die they will only write ‘Chandos’ on my grave, and the name will tell the world its own tale!”

They were strange words; and, where he leaned against the oriel, the light from the setting autumn sun fell full upon his face, deepening there the lofty and spiritual exaltation of thoughts too far above his years. His father looked at him, and something that was almost a sigh passed the haughty lips of the great minister. The sigh was for the future of those heroic and pure ambitions, for the world which would break them as surely as the pressure of the iron roller crushes out the flowers of spring. And he could not utter to the child, in the proud gladness of his young faith, the warning that rose to his own lips: “Keep those dreams for other worlds, for they will never find fruition here.”

Yet, for the boy to whom these dreams came, untaught and instinctive, in all their superb impossibility, their divine unreality, his father could not but hope himself a future and an ambition still loftier than his own.

“The darling of the gods!” said Flora de l’Orme, to-night, as she wound the crown of scarlet roses in her lover’s hair; and she had said very truly. Fortune and the world never combined to flatter any man more than they combined to shower all gifts and graces on Ernest Chandos. When he had been but a child in his laces and velvets princes had tossed him bonbons and royal women caressed his loveliness. Tutors, parasites, servants, indulged all his fancies, and never controlled or contradicted him. At Eton, nicknamed the Dauphin, he bore all before him, was noted for his champagne breakfasts, and had a duke for his devoted fag. At seventeen he was his own master. His father died grandly as Chatham,



falling back, without a sigh or struggle, after one of the finest speeches of his life, in the full career of his magnificent and fearless leadership. The boy's grief was intense, both passionate and enduring, for he had worshipped his father and his father's fame. By his own wish he went abroad: he would not hear of a college. His only guardian was his grandfather by the distaff-side, the Duke of Castlemaine, an old soldier and statesman of the Regency time: his mother had died years before. The Duke let him do precisely as he chose, which was to remain abroad four years, chiefly in the East, where life, whether waiting for the lion's or leopard's step through the sultry hush of an Oriental night, or learning soft love-lore from the dark eyes of a Georgian under the shadows of a palm-grove, enchanted and enchained one who, whatever afterwards might make him, was in his youth only a poet, and a lover of all fair things,—especially of the fairness of women. Life seemed to conspire to idolise him and to ruin him: after a boyhood of limitless indulgence, limitless tenderness, and limitless enjoyment, he passed to the enervating, poetic, picturesque, sensuousness of life in the Eastern nations, where every breath was a perfume, every day was a poem, and every lovely face was a captive's, to be bought at pleasure. He returned, to become the idol of a fashionable world. His beauty, his wit, his genius, that showed itself, half capriciously, half indolently, in glittering *jeux d'esprit*, his generosity, that scattered wealth to whoever asked, the magnificence of his entertainments,—these became the themes of the most exclusive and most seductive of worlds; and while men cited him to the echo, with women he had only to love and he had won. He was the comet of his horizon, and fashion streamed after him.

Some romances, and some poems, were traced to him,

—dazzling, vivid, full of glowing, if sometimes extravagant, fancy, and of that easy grace which is only heaven-born in authors or in artists. They were raved of in Paris and London; he found himself twice famous, by literature and by fashion; and his invitation was far more courted than one to Windsor or the Tuileries: *those* only conferred rank, *his* gave a far higher and subtler distinction,—fashion.

For the rest, his fortune was large, his estates of Clarencieux were as noble as any in England, and he had a house in Park Lane, an hotel in the Champs Elysées, a toy villa at Richmond, and a summer-palace on the Bosphorus; and, costly as were both his pleasures and his art-tastes, even those did not cost him so much as a liberality that none ever applied to in vain, a liberality that was the only thing in his life he strove to conceal, and that aided men of talent to a fair field, or lifted them from the slough of narrowed fortunes, by a hand that often was unseen by them, that always gave, when compelled to give openly, with a charm that banished all humiliation from the gift.

Thus was Chandos now.

How far had he borne out his childish promise of the night in Westminster? He could not have told himself. He was the most dazzling leader, the most refined voluptuary, the most splendid patron, the most courted man, of his times: and in the soft ease, the lavished wealth, the unclouded successes of his present, he asked and heeded no more. He was at the height of brilliant renown, and not even a doubled rose-leaf broke his rest.

“Who ever said that we cannot love two at once? It is the easiest thing in the world to love half a dozen; to love but *one* were to show a shocking lack of appreciation of nature’s fairest gifts. Constancy is the worst possible

compliment a blockhead can pay to the *beau sexe*," thought Chandos, the next morning, as he breakfasted, glancing through a pile of scented delicate notes, cream, rose, *pale tendre*, and snow-white, perfumed with various fragrance, but all breathing one tone. Women had done their uttermost to force him into vanity from his childhood, when queens had petted him. Women always coax their favourites into ruin if they can. His temper chanced to be such that they had entirely failed. Of his personal beauty Chandos never thought more than he thought of the breath he drew.

It was twelve o'clock as he took his chocolate in his dressing-room, a chamber fit for a young princess, with its azure hangings, its Russian cabinets, and its innumerable flowers. Perfumes and female beauty were his two special weaknesses, as they were Mahomet's. He was a man of pleasure, be it remembered, with the heart of a poet and the eyes of a painter,—a combination to make every temptation tenfold more tempting.

"Cool you look here!" cried a resonant, lively, clear voice, telling as a trumpet-call, as that privileged person John Trevenna pushed lightly past a valet and made his way into the chamber.

"My dear fellow! Delighted to see you. Come to breakfast!"

"Breakfast? Had it hours ago, and done no end of business since. We poor devils, you know, are obliged to walk about the streets in the noonday; it's only you *grands seigneurs* who can lie in the shade doing nothing. Peaches, grapes, chocolate, and claret for your breakfast! How French you are! The public wouldn't think you a safe member of society if they knew you didn't take the orthodox British under-done chop and slice of bacon

virtually undistinguishable from shoe-leather. I wonder what you *would* do if you were a poor man, Ernest?"

Chandos laughed and gave a shudder. "Do! glide away in a dose of morphia. Poor! I can't *fancy* it, even."

Trevenna smiled as he tossed himself into the softest lounging-chair. *He* had known what poverty was,—known it in its ugliest, its blackest, its barest, and had learned to hate it with a loathing, unutterable, and thoroughly justified; for poverty is the grimmest foe the world holds, a serpent that stifles talent ere talent can rise, that blasts genius ere genius can be heard, that sows hot hate by a cold hearth, and that turns the germ of good into the giant of evil.

"Trevenna," went on Chandos, taking one of his hot-house peaches, "who was that new beauty at the Duc's yesterday? I never saw anything lovelier."

"There are twenty new beauties this season,—in their own estimation, at least! Be a little more explicit, please."

"She was with the Chesterton. Really beautiful; beautiful as a Giorgione. There were plenty of men about her. I should have asked who she was, and have been presented to her, but I had no time to stay, even for her."

"With the Chesterton? Why, Ivors's daughter, of course."

"Ivors? Died last year, didn't he?—of losing the Guineas, they said, to the French colt. Why haven't I seen her before?"

"Because she has been in Rome. She's *the* thing of the year is my Lady Valencia. You'll see her at the Drawing Room to-morrow," said Trevenna. He was a walking court-newsman and fashionable directory, being able to tell you at a second's notice who was at the bottom of the St. Leger scandal about the powder in Etoile's

drinking-water, what divorces were in train, what amatory passages great ladies confided to their Bramah-locked diaries, and whose loose paper was flying about most awkwardly among the Jews. "I noticed you looked at her yesterday," he pursued: "so did the Countess. She's fearfully jealous of you! Take care you don't get a note chemically perfumed à la Brinvilliers. I wonder what on earth she would do if you were ever to marry!"

"Shrug her pretty shoulders, pity my wife, and console me, to be sure. But I shall never try her. Twenty years hence, perhaps, if I have nothing better to do, and ever see the woman of my ideal——"

"That impossible she,  
Wherever she be,  
In meerschäum dreams of fantasie!"

paraphrased Trevenna. "What a queer idea, to be longing for ideal women when there are all the living ones at your service! That is preferring the shadow to the substance. What can you want that Flora and all the rest have not?"

Chandos laughed, nestling in among the cushions of his sofa at full length. "My dear Trevenna, it would be talking in Arabic to you to tell you. Indeed, you'd understand the Sanscrit much quicker, you most material of men."

"Certainly I am material! A material man dines well and digests well. A visionary man enjoys his banquet of the soul, and has a deuced deal of neuralgia after it. Which were best?—Lucullus's cherry-trees, or Lucullus's conquests? The victories are no good to anybody now. Asia and Europe have been mapped out again twenty times; but cherry brandy will last as long as the world lasts. Conquerors supplant each other like mushrooms, but cherry tarts are perennial and eternal as long as

generations are born to go to school. Material! Of course I am. Which enjoyed life best,—your grand *summum bonum*?—Dante, or Falstaff? Milton, or Sir John Suckling?”

“And which does posterity revere?”

“Posterity be shot! If I pick the bones of ortolans in comfort while I am alive, what does it matter to me how people pick my bones after I’m gone? A dish of truffles or terrapin to tickle my palate is a deal more to my taste than a wreath of *immortelles* hung on my grave. I detest posterity; every king hates his heir; but I dearly love a good dinner. If I could choose what should become of my bones, I’d have myself made into gelatine; gelatine’s such a rascally cheat, and assists at such capital banquets, it’s the most appropriate final destiny for any human being that was ever devised. But what’s the good of my talking to you? We look at life through different glasses.”

“Rather!”

“A disdainful enough dissyllable. Well, we shall see which is best content of us two, after all,—I, the animal man, or you, the artistic. You’ve tremendous odds in your favour. I shall deserve great honour if I make any head against you.”

A shadow passed slightly over the face of Chandos; he had the variable and impressionable temperament of a poetic nature, a deep thoughtfulness, even to melancholy, mingled in contrast with the gayest and most nonchalant epicureanism.

“Content? at the end? How is it to be secured? Æmilianus led a noble and glorious life,—to fall by an assassin’s dagger. Ovid led the gayest and the brightest life,—to go out to the frozen misery of Pannonia. Africanus was a hero,—to be accused of stealing the public

money. Petronius was an epicurean,—to die by a lingering torture."

Trevenna laughed as he took a cigar from a case standing near, lighted it, and rose.

"Hang Petronius! It could have been no fun to torment him: the fellow died so game,—wouldn't *wince* once! As for the end of the farce we play in,

"Tis not in mortals to *deserve* success;  
But you'll do more, Sempronius; you'll *command* it!"

I like that mis-quotation. Only 'deserve' success, and I should like to know who'll give you your deserts! But I must go. There are no end of poor devils waiting outside: working authors and working jewellers; mute, inglorious Miltons, and glorious, talkative tailors; dealers with cracked antiques, and poets with cracked novelties; sculptors with their bronzes, and young Chattertons with their brass—I beg pardon, I forgot! one mustn't laugh at genius, even in a shabby coat, here."

"No: Le Sage had no coat on in his attic when he refused the millionaire's bribe. 'Tout compte fait, je suis plus riche que vous, et je refuse!'"

"And you think that sublime? to tell the truth and starve? Faugh! I'd have taken their cheque, and written a ten times more stinging *Turcaret* afterwards! But, on my word, Chandos, your ante-rooms are as thronged as any Chesterfield's or Halifax's of a hundred years ago."

"Nonsense! There is no patronage nowadays. A man makes himself."

"Pardon me, his bank-balance makes him! If it be heavy enough, it will cover all sins,—intellectual, moral, and grammatical,—and float him as high as heaven. Well, what are your commands to-day? I know what to do about securing those *genre* pictures; and I'm now going to the Corner to see what the mid-day betting is

for us; and I sent the *cabochon* emeralds to Mademoiselle Flora, and grudged her them heartily; and I have seen to the enlarging of the smoking-room of the *Anadyomene*. Anything else?"

"My dear fellow, no; I think not, I thank you. Unless—they tell me there are some good things in Della Robbia at the Vere collection: you might look at them, if you don't mind the trouble; buy, if they are really perfect. And bring me word round, if you can learn, what houses this daughter of Ivors will show at to-night. I never saw a lovelier face; but there is a quality above beauty that probably she has not. Rahel is not absolutely handsome; but that woman has such sorcery in her that you could not be ten minutes with her without being in love."

With which tribute to the great actress's power, Chandos, a connoisseur in female charms, from those of a Greek grape-girl to those of a Tuileries princess, from the grace of a Bayadère to the glamour of a Rosière, resumed his purpose of glancing through the innumerable little amorous notes that accompanied his breakfast, while Trevenna sauntered out, pausing a moment to put in his head at the door—

"I lamed my horse over that wretched heap of stones in Bolton Row. May I use one of your horses?"

"My dear fellow, what a question! My stables are yours, of course."

And John Trevenna went out on his morning's work. He called himself a business-man; but what his business was, beyond being prime minister, master of the horse, and chancellor of the exchequer to Chandos, and knowing all the news before anybody else whispered it, was what was never altogether ascertained. Be his business what it might, in amusement Trevenna brought his own wel-



come to every one; and he entertained Society so well that Society was always ready to entertain him.

Society, that smooth and sparkling sea, is excessively difficult to navigate; its surf looks no more than champagne foam, but a thousand quicksands and shoals lie beneath; there are breakers ahead for more than half the dainty pleasure-boats that skim their hour upon it; and the foundered lie by millions, forgotten, five fathoms deep below. The only safe ballast upon it is gold dust; and if stress of weather come on you it will swallow you without remorse. Trevenna had none of this ballast; he had come out to sea in as ticklish a cockle-shell as might be; he might go down any moment, and he carried no commission, being a sort of nameless, unchartered rover: yet float he did, securely.

Twelve years before, one hot night at Baden, a penniless young Englishman had lost more than he had in his purse,—had, indeed, in the world; the bank arrested him; his prospect for life was to languish in German prisons, the prey of the debts which he could not liquidate and none else would pay for him. For he was alone in life, and had, for all he knew, not a solitary friend upon the face of the earth. A boy of twenty, throwing his gold about to the enchantress of Play, heard the story, paid the debts, and freed the debtor. The boy was Chandos, the young master of Clarencieux. It was the last dilemma into which astute John Trevenna ever let life betray him; and it was his first step towards social success. His boy-benefactor was not content with letting his good services begin and end at the prison of the duchy: he made the prisoner his guest then and there. He was infinitely amused, too, with a companion sufficiently near his own age to enter into all his pleasures, and who was the first person he had ever met who told him the truth with frank

good nature and never annoyed him by flattery. From that day, through Chandos, John Trevenna was welcomed in the World; and the World soon kept him in it as a sort of Town Triboulet.

He was a privileged person: every one knows how immense a *carte blanche* is given by those words. Chandos was the fashion; he pleased himself by doing all good services to Trevenna that circumstances would allow of; and the world petted Trevenna because Chandos befriended him. He lived so very near the rose that much of the tender dews so lavishly poured down on the king flower fell of necessity upon him. He was often rude, always brusque, *sans façon*, sometimes even a little coarse; but he was so frank, so imperturbably good-humoured, told stories so admirably, and had such a thorough spice of true wit, that he was as good with wine as anchovies or olives, and men had him with their wine accordingly. Was a château dull on the shores of Monaco or Baiæ, or a country-house dull in the recesses; was there a dearth of news in a hot club-room at the fag-end of a season; was the conversation dragging wearily over an aristocratic dinner-table; or was a duke half dead of *ennui* in the midst of a great gathering, the bright, laughing face of John Trevenna, with the white teeth glancing in a merry, honest smile, always fresh, never faded, never bored, but always looking, because always feeling, as if life were the pleasantest comedy that could be played, was the signal of instant relief and of instant amusement. The legions of blue-devils flew before his approach, and no *ennui* could withstand the tonic of his caustic humour and his incessant mirth.

Even His Grace of Castlemaine, haughtiest of Garter knights, most hard to please of all Regency wits,—even that splendid old man, who had set his face against this stray member of society, could not altogether withstand him.

"Chandos' *homme d'affaires*? An interloper, sir, an adventurer, and I detest adventurers:—tell you a first-rate story, make you a first-rate *mot*, but always have a second king in their sleeve for your *écarté*! Society's a soil you can't *weed* too vigorously. Still, a humorous fellow, I must confess; a clever fellow,—very."

So John Trevenna had laughed his way into the world, and, laughing, held his own there. No one ever heard the story of the Baden debts from Chandos, but Trevenna openly confessed himself a poor man; he never teased people with reminding them of it, but stated the fact once for all without disguise. He made a little money on the turf, and doubled that little now and then by ingenious traffic here and there in the commercial gambling that the world sanctifies; but nobody knew this. He was simply a man-upon-town. He lived very inexpensively, dining out every night of his life; he had no vices; he was an epicure, but that taste he only indulged at other people's tables; and he had no weakness for women; if you had offered him a beautiful mistress or a dozen of Imperial Tokay, he would without hesitation have taken the Tokay.

As regarded his intellect, he had talent enough to be anything,—from a jockey to an ambassador, from a head cook to a premier.

"The Queen of Lilies will be at the Des Vaux to-night, Chandos," said he, that evening, in the green drawing-room at Park Lane, where, some dozen guests having dined with him, including S.A.R. the Duc de Neuilly, and H.S.H. the Prince Carl of Steinberg, Chandos was now playing at *baccarat*, half a hundred engagements being thrown over, as chanced inevitably with him every night in the season. Trevenna himself was not playing; he never touched cards at any game except whist, which he had studied as—what it is—a science. He stood on the hearth-

rug, looking on, taking now and then a glass of Moselle or Maraschino from a console near.

"What a charming name,—The Queen of Lilies! Who is she?" asked his host, having already forgotten the commission he gave.

"The Queen of Lilies? Ah, she is exquisite! you have not seen her, of course, Ernest?" asked the French prince. "The Laureate gave her the title."

"In a sonnet, made instantly public by being marked Private. If you want a piece of news to fly over Europe like lightning, whisper it as a secret that would infallibly destroy you if it ever got wind," put in Trevenna, who among princes and peers never could keep his tongue still.

"But who is she? A new dancer, I hope. We have nothing good in the *coulisses*."

"A dancer? No! She is Ivors' daughter."

"Ah! I remember, I saw her yesterday. The Queen of Lilies, do you call her? The name is an idyll!"

"Ah!" said his Grace of Crowndiamonds, with a cross between an oath and a regret. "She is a great deal too handsome!"

"Too handsome? How charming a blemish! They generally sin the other way, my dear Crown."

"Too handsome; for—she is ice!"

"Never find fault with women, old fellow! We may all of us think that each of those dainty treasures has a flaw somewhere; but we should never hint a doubt of them, any more than of their Dresden."

"Though the best Dresden is only soiled earth, just painted and glazed!" broke in Trevenna, taking out his watch. "You told me to learn where she went. At nine she dined with the French Ambassador; at twelve she was at Livingstone House; at one she was at Lady Belling-

ham's; and now, fifty-five minutes past one, she is at the Countess des Vaux's."

"Do you find out everything, Monsieur Trevenna?" laughed the French duc.

Trevenna looked at him with a certain saucy triumph in his bold Saxon-blue eyes—blue as forget-me-nots, and keen as a knife.

"Yes, monseigneur—if I wish."

The answer was quiet, and, wonderful for him, without a jest; but the prince turned and gave him a more earnest look than he had ever bestowed on this *flâneur*, this *rôdeur* of the English clubs.

"He will be a successful man, a great man, ten to one, when our brilliant Chandos, who has the genius of a Goethe, will have died of dissipation or have killed himself for some mistress's infidelity," thought the duke, a keen man of the world, while his eyes glanced from the sagacious, indomitable, fresh-coloured face of Trevenna to the delicate, proud, dazzling beauty of Chandos, with the light in his deep-blue eyes and the laughter on his insouciant lips.

"We should all of us have been at those places, if your *baccarat* had not beguiled us, Chandos," said the Comte de la Joie; "but social entertainments are a crying cruelty."

"And a great mistake. Society is ruined by the *rôture*, which has nothing to recommend its entertainments but the cooking, and has made the cooking the measure of the entertainments. St. Fond's verdict of English banquets remains true to the letter: *Ils se saoulèrent grandement et se divertirent moult tristement!*"

"Oh, we all know what you are, Chandos," cried Trevenna. "You'd exchange your own cook—though he is priceless, were it only for his soups—to be able to eat a

dried date with Plato, and would give up White's for the Scipionic circle or the Mermaid evenings!"

"Perhaps. Though I admit you are a more practical philosopher than any in Academus, and are as good a companion as Lucilius or Ben Jonson."

"I hope I am," said Trevenna, complacently. "I bet you the philosophers flavoured their dates, as we do our olives, by discussing Lalage's ankles and the Agora gossip. Scipio talked fine, we know; Lucilius laughed at him for it, and fine talkers are always bores; and as for the Mermaid—Raleigh whispered wicked things of the maids of honour, and Shakspeare wondered what old Combe would leave him in his will, and Ben joked him about the Crown Inn widow over mulled posset. The Immortals were as mortal as we are, every whit."

With which Trevenna washed down their immortality by a glass of golden water.

"Shall we all go and criticise this Lily Queen, Chandos?" asked the Duc de Neuilly. "She will not be believed in till you have given her the *cordon* of your approbation."

Prince Carl was willing, the *baccarat* was deserted, and they went to the crowded rooms of the Countess des Vaux.

"There she is!" said Neuilly, on the staircase, that was still thronged.

She was beautiful as a young deer, and had something of the stag's lofty grace. Her eyes were a deep brown, large, thoughtful, proud, swept by lashes a shade darker still; her lips were sweet as half-opened roses; her hair, the same hue as her eyes, was drawn back in soft floating masses from a brow like a Greek antique; she was very tall, and her form was simply perfect. It was in its fullest loveliness, too, for she had been some years in Rome, and successive deaths in her family had kept her long in almost comparative seclusion.

"You said she was cold! Such beauty as that can never be passionless," said Chandos.

As though his voice had reached her through the long distance that severed them, she turned her head at that moment, and their eyes met.

Corals, pink and delicate, rivet continents together; ivy tendrils, that a child may break, hold Norman walls with bonds of iron; a little ring, a toy of gold, a jeweller's bagatelle, forges chains heavier than the galley-slave's: so a woman's look may fetter a lifetime.

"Passionless! with those eyes? Impossible!" said Chandos.

"Oh, she will have two passions," said Crowndiamonds, dryly—"two very strong passions—vanity and ambition!"

"For shame!" laughed Chandos. "Never be cynical upon women, Crown. It is breaking butterflies upon the wheel, and shooting humming-birds with field-pieces. Well, let the Lily Queen's sins be what they may, she is lovely enough to make us forgive them."

And he made his way at last into the rooms with the French and English dukes, to be detained right and left, and make his further way with difficulty into his hostess's presence.

When he was at all free, and sought to look for the Queen of Lilies, he found that she had left.

"I shall see her at the Drawing-Room," thought Chandos, whom too many were ever ready to console, for him ever to be left to regret an absent loveliness. Men of his temperament, the temperament of Goethe, are incessantly accused of inconstancy, because the list of their loves is long. On the contrary, they are most constant—to their own ideal, which they unceasingly pursue in every form which has its outward semblance. What their dreams long for is not there—in that beautiful shadow that looked so like

it, but which was but a transparency, only bright through borrowed light; then they cease to love till again they pursue a shadow; and fools call them libertines.

That night, or rather in the dawn, Heloïse, Countess de la Vivarol, looked at her own face in the mirror, while her attendants were taking the sapphires and onyxes from her hair. It was well worth looking at, with its glancing falcon radiance of regard, its indescribable witchery of coquetry, and its rich, delicate tints, independent, as yet, even of pearl-powder. Her mother was the Princesse Lucille Viardort, who had married an English baronet; her father none was ever so bold as to name,—the baronet himself put in no claim for her; he lived apart from his wife, who was a handsome, sunny, good-tempered creature, as happy in the midst of the slander to which she gave rise, as a sea-anemone in a rock pool. It was her normal element: the Viardort, that restless and dominant race who had played at bowls with nothing less than all the rolling diadems of Europe, always had scandalised the world ever since they burst, meteor-like, upon it. All the Viardort love sovereignty, and get it, though none are born to it. Heloïse, who at sixteen had married the Count Granier de la Vivarol, was not behind her race. She plunged eagerly, up to her lovely throat, in European intrigues,—so eagerly that she was now banished from France. Her lord did not follow her,—there lives not the man who could prefer a wife to Paris,—but allowed her richly, so richly, indeed, that she never called him anything worse than "*ce petit drôle*" when speaking of him in connection with her money-matters. With any other affairs he never came under discussion.

Before her banishment from Paris, Chandos, at the same time with herself, had been among the First Circle of autumn guests at Compiègne. In the torchlight *curées*,



in the moon-lit terraces, in the palace theatricals, in the forest hunts, she had fascinated him, he had attracted her. M. le Comte was a thoroughly well-bred man, who knew the destinies of husbands, abhorred a scene, and neither sought a duel nor a divorce: besides, he was not at the court. Their love-passages went silvery smooth, and were quite a page out of Boccaccio. Now Madame was disposed to be jealous, and Chandos was a little disposed to be tired. Studies after Boccaccio often end thus,—in bathos.

To-night she looked at her face in her mirror, and her tiny white teeth clenched like a little lion-dog's. Perhaps the love she had taught mercilessly so often had revenged itself here on its teacher; perhaps it was but pique that made her so tenacious to keep the sway she had held over the handsomest man of his age; be the spring love, vanity, passion, or envy, what it would, her eyes glittered with a dangerous gleam under her curling lashes, and she muttered, between her set teeth—

“If he ever love another, if it be twenty years hence—”

### CHAPTER III.

#### A Prime Minister at Home.

OVER and over again John Trevenna had been pressed to take up residence in the stately suites of the Park Lane house; but this he had always refused. He dined there, lunched there, ordered what he chose there, and stayed for months each year at Clarencieux; but he had his own rooms in town, in a quiet street near the clubs. He liked to retain a distinct personality. Besides, people came to see him here who could never have shown themselves before the porter of the great leader of fashion; men with bulldog heads and close-cut hair, known as “sporting gents;” men with the glance of a ferret and the jewellery of Burlington Arcade, utterly and unmistakably “horsy;”

men who always had "a lovely thing close by in the mews,—go in your 'and, and only thirty sovs.," to sell, but who traded in many things besides toy terriers; men very soberly dressed, hard-featured, hard-headed members of trades-unions; men with long floating beards, the look of Burschen and "artist" written on them for those who ran to read, without the paint-splashes on their coats; men with clean-shaven faces or white pointed beards, but, shaven or hirsute, Israelites to the bone: all these varieties, and many more came to see Trevenna, who could never have gone into the hall of the fastidious and patrician Chandos.

On the surface, Trevenna had but one set of friends, his aristocratic acquaintances of the clubs and the Clarendon dinners; *sub rosa*, this bright Bohemian was thoroughly versed in every phase and, indeed, every sink of London life and of human nature. It was "his way" to know everybody,—it might be of use some day; he went now—in the same spirit of restless activity and indomitable perseverance which had made him as a boy ask the meaning of every machine and the tricks of every trade that he passed—to the probing of every problem and the cementing of every brick in life. The multitudes whom he knew were countless; the histories he had fathomed were unrecordable. Men were the pawns, knights, bishops, and castles of Trevenna's chess, and he set himself to win the game with them, never neglecting the smallest, for a pawn sometimes gives checkmate.

Trevenna sat now at breakfast early in the morning, —half-past eight, indeed,—though he had not been in bed until four. He slept the sound, sweet, peaceful sleep of a child, and very little of that profound repose sufficed for him. His rooms were scrupulously neat, but bare of everything approaching art or decoration; Chandos could

not have lived a day in them, if he had been a poor man; condemned to them, he would have hung an engraving here, or a cast from the antique there, that would have gone some way to redeem them in their useful ugliness. Trevenna was utterly indifferent to that ugliness; as far as his eyes went, he would have been as happy in a garret as in a palace.

His breakfast was only coffee and a chop; he exercised the strictest economy in his life. It was not, to be sure, very painful to him; for he had the run of all the wealthiest houses in England, and was welcomed to every table. Still, it was significant of the man that, well as he liked all gourmets' delicacies, he never by any chance squandered money on them, and if he had to go without them from year's end to year's end, never would have done. Naturally he was very self-indulgent, but he had schooled himself into considerable control.

The coffee was something rough, the chop was something tough,—English cookery pure; but Trevenna, who would know to a T what was wanting in the flavour of a white sauce at the best club in Pall Mall, and who could appreciate every finest shade in the most masterly art of the Park Lane *chef*, took both chop and coffee without a murmur. In the first place, he had the good appetite of a thoroughly healthy and vigorous constitution; in the second, he would compensate himself by the daintiest and most delicious of noon *déjeûners* at Chandos' house.

While he ate and drank he was looking at some memoranda, and talking to a man before him,—a man who stood before him as an inferior before his employer; a tall man, lean, venerable, saturnine, with iron-grey hair that floated on his shoulders like a patriarch, and down his chest in a waving beard,—a man in his sixtieth year, with his shoulders a little bowed, and his hands lightly clasped in front of him.

This was Ignatius Mathias, of the firm of Tindall & Co., which firm was well known Citywards, in a little, dark, crooked, stifling lane, where their dusky, sullen-looking, rickety door was only too familiar to men in the Guards, men in Middle Temple, men in the Commons, and men in nothing at all but a fashionable reputation and a cloud of debts. Tindall & Co. dealt in damaged paper chiefly; they bought up most of the awkward things that floated in the market, and, it was said, were making a great deal of money. This was but guess-work, however, for the little grimy den of an office told no secrets, however many it guarded; and who was Tindall, and who were Co., was a thing never known; the only person ever seen, ever found there as responsible, was Ignatius Mathias, a Castilian Jew, and most people considered that he was the Firm; they never were surer on this point than when he shook his head gravely and said he "could but act on his instructions; his principal had been very positive: his principal could not wait."

But, be this as it might, Ignatius Mathias was no common Jew lender; he never sought to palm off a miserable home-smoked Rembrandt, a cracked violin christened a Straduarious, or a case of wretched marsala called madeira, on a customer. Tindall & Co. had none of these tricks; they simply did business, and if they did it in a very severe manner, if when they had sucked their orange dry they threw the peel away, something cruelly, into the mud, they still only did business thoroughly legitimately, thoroughly strictly. Their customers might curse them with terrible bitterness, as the head and root of their destruction, but they could never legally complain of them.

"Sit down, Mathias; sit down, and pour yourself out a cup of coffee," said Trevenna. "I'll run my eyes through these papers; and when you have drunk your coffee, be

able to account me the receipts of the month. I know what they should be; we'll see what they are."

"You will find them correct, sir," said Mathias, meekly; "and I need no coffee, I thank you."

Neither did he take the proffered seat; he remained standing, his dark brooding eyes dwelling on the parchment-bound receipt-book open before him.

The papers supplied the sauce which was wanting to Trevenna's underdone mutton; as he glanced through them, his humorous lips laughed silently every now and then, and his light-blue, cloudless, dauntless eyes sparkled with a suppressed amusement. These papers, and their like, brought him as keen a pleasure and excitation as other men find in a fox-hunt or a deer-drive; it was the chase, and without the fatigue of dashing over bullfinches or watching in sloppy weather for the quarry; it was a *battue* into which all the game was driven ready to hand,—through and through under the fire of the guns. The beaters had all the trouble; the marksman all the sport.

"Chittenden:—dined with him at the Star and Garter last Thursday: we'll soon stop those dinners, my boy. Bertie Brabazon:—oh! he's going to be married to the Rosefleck heiress: better let *him* alone. Grey Græme:—who would have thought of *his* being in Queer Street? Jemmy Haughton:—little fellow,—barrister,—got a bishop for an uncle,—bishop will bleed,—won't see him screwed; Church hates scandals,—especially when it's in lawn sleeves. Talbot O'Moore—Wareley—Belminster——Very good,—very good," murmured Trevenna over details of paper floating about town, that those whom it otherwise concerned would have rather characterised, on the contrary, as very bad. He meditated a little while over the memoranda,—amused meditation that washed down the flavourless coarseness of his breakfast; then he thrust his

breakfast-cup awry, pocketed the lists, and went steadily to business. Not that he looked grave, dull, or absorbed even in that; he was simply bright, intelligent, and alert, as he was in a ducal smoking-room; but Ignatius Mathias knew that those sagacious, sparkling glances would have discovered the minutest flaw in his finance, and that the man who listened so lightly, with a briar-wood pipe between his lips, and his elbows resting on the mantel-piece, would have been down on him like lightning at the slightest attempt to blind or to cheat one who was keener even than that keen Israelite.

"All right," said Trevenna, as, having come to the completion of his monthly accounts, the Portuguese closed his book and waited for instructions. Trevenna never wasted words over business, rapidly as he chatted over dinner-tables and in club-rooms; and Ignatius and he understood each other. "You take care to keep Tindall & Co. dark, eh?"

"Every care, sir."

"Encourage them to think *you* Tindall & Co. by the charming and expressive character of your denial, your inflexible austerity, your constant references to your principal. The more you refer to him, you know, the more they'll be sure that he doesn't exist. Everybody takes it for granted that a Jew lies."

There was a cheerful, easy serenity in the tone, as though uttering the pleasantest compliment possible, that made them sound all the more cutting, all the more heartless; yet they were spoken with such happy indifference.

The Jew's dark and hollow cheek flushed slightly: he bent his head.

"I observe all your commands, sir."

"Of course you do," said Trevenna, carelessly. "The first you disobey will set the police after Young Hopeful.

Tell him it's no use to hide: I know he's at that miserable little Black Forest village now. He may just as well come and walk about London. He can't escape *me*. When I want him, I shall put my hand on him if he buries himself under a Brazilian forest; *you* know that."

A change came over the unmovable, impassive form of the Castilian,—a change that shook him suddenly from head to foot, as a reed trembles in the wind. What little blood there was in his dark, worn face forsook it; a look of hunted and terrible anguish came into his eyes. With the long-suffering patience of his race, no outburst of passion or of entreaty escaped him; but his lips were dry as bones as he murmured faintly, "Sir, sir, be merciful! I serve faithfully; I will give my body night and day to redeem the lad's sin."

Trevenna laughed lightly.

"That's the compact. Keep it, and I don't touch the boy," he said curtly.

"You are very good, sir."

"You may go now," said Trevenna, with a nod. "You know what to do in all cases; and don't forget to put the screw on to Fotheringay at once. The next time come a little earlier,—seven or so; if I'm in bed, I'll see you. It's rather dangerous when people are about; your visits might get blown on. All *my* people—the dainty gentlemen—are never up till noonday, it's true; but their servants might be about. At all events, 'safe bind, safe find.' They might wonder what I borrowed money of you for; it would hurt my character."

He laughed gaily and merrily over the words; they tickled his fancy. The Jew bowed reverentially to him, gathered up his papers, and left the room.

"The best organisations are sure to have a flaw," thought Trevenna, leaning there still with his elbows on

the mantel-piece, smoking meditatively. "Now, there is that Jew; marvellous clever fellow, shrewd, got head enough to be a finance-minister; grind a man as well as anybody can; take you in most neatly; a magnificent machine altogether for cheating, and hard as a flint; and yet that Jew's such a fool over his worthless young rascal of a son that you can turn him round your finger through it. *There* he's as soft as an idiot and as blind as a bat. Incomprehensible that a man can let such trash creep into him! It's very odd, men have so many weaknesses; I don't think I've got one."

He had one; but, like most men, he did not imagine it was weakness, and in truth it was not a very tender one, though it was very dominant.

"Not at home to all the dukes in the world, my dear, till twelve," said he, as the maid-servant of his lodgings (he kept no man-servant of any kind, except a miniature tiger to hang on behind his tilbury) cleared away the breakfast-service. That done, Trevenna sat down to a table strewn with blue-books, books on political economy, books on population and taxation, books on government, books English, French, German, and American, all tending to the same direction of study.

He certainly did not need to ponder over the statistics of nations to conduct his affairs with Ignatius Mathias, however intricate they were, and he had received every benefit that a first-rate education can confer. But he was one of those wise men who remember that the longest and most learned life, spent aright, never ceases to learn till its last breath is drawn; and, moreover, far away in limitless perspective in Trevenna's ambitions lay an arena where the victory is not to the strong, nor the race to the swift, but to the ablest tactician in such rare instances as it departs from the hereditary winners,—an arena where



adventurers are excluded as utterly as men of the foreign states, though they were princes, were excluded from the games of Elis. So for three hours and a half that idle, gossiping *flâneur*, that town-jester whom the town called Chandos' Chicot, plunged himself deep into political subtleties, and the science of statecraft, and the close logic of finance, bringing to their problems a head which grew only clearer the tougher the problem it clenched, the deeper the ground it explored. Hard study was as thorough a revelry to Trevenna as plunging into the cool, living water is to a great swimmer. Like the swimmer, his heart beat joyously as he dived only to rise again the fresher and the bolder. Like the swimmer, his soul rose triumphant as he felt and he measured his strength.

Twelve struck.

He, who was as punctual as if he were made by clock-work, got up, changed his dress in ten minutes, and rang for his tilbury to be brought round. "I will indemnify myself for my ascetic chop in Park Lane, but I will see how the wind is blowing for Sir Galahad at the Corner first," thought Trevenna; and thither he went.

The mid-day betting was eager, for it was within a month of the Ascot week. "The gentlemen" were barely out yet; but the book-makers were mustered in full force, from the small speculators, who usually did a little quiet business only in trotting-matches and quiet handicaps, to the great gamblers of the ring, who took noblemen's odds in thousands, and netted as much in lucky hits as those other great gamblers of the 'Change and the Bourse whom a world that frowns on the Heath smiles on so benignly when they are successful. All the vast genus, flashy, slangy, sharp as needles, with a language of their own, a literature of their own, a world of their own, whom marquises and earls are eagerly familiar with in the

levelling atmosphere of the Lawn and the Downs, and give a distant frigid nod to, at the uttermost, if they pass them in Piccadilly, were there; and amidst them, in the terrific babel of raised voices, Trevenna pushed his way, —as he pushed it everywhere.

Sir Galahad was higher than ever in public favour. All the shrewdest men were afraid to touch him. The Clarencieux stables had been famous since the Regency. Trevenna bet but very little usually, he was known to have but little money to risk; but men were eager to have his opinion of the favourite. None had such opportunities of telling to a nicety the points, powers, stay, and pace of the Clarencieux horse in its prime. He gave the opinion frankly enough. Sir Galahad was the finest horse of the year, and to his mind would all but walk over the course. The opinion went for a great deal, especially from one who was a master of stable-science, but who was no betting man himself. He had laid heavy bets in Chandos' name, backing the favourite for considerable sums so long as any could be found rash enough to take them.

There was one little, spare, red-wigged, foxy, quiet man who offered bets on a chestnut—Diadem, an outsider, unknown and unnoticed, generally looked on by the touts as fiddle-headed and weedy. The colt had trained in an obscure stable northward, and was a "colt" only to his breeders and owners in familiar parlance, having been known as a Plater in northern autumn-meetings, though having earned no sort of renown anywhere.

When Trevenna left Tattersall's, this little leg, a worn-out, shattered creature, who had ruined himself over one St. Leger and collapsed under it, was walking slowly out in the sun, having backed nothing except this ill-conditioned colt. Trevenna paused a second by him:

"Drop Diadem's name, or they'll be smelling a rat,"

he murmured. "Take the field against the favourite with any fools you like, as widely as you can."

"Wonderfully dark we have kept that chestnut. He's so ugly! that's the treasure of him; and we've trained him so close, and roped him so cleverly, that the sharpest tout that ever lay in a ditch all night to catch a morning gallop doesn't guess what that precious awkward-looking brute can do," thought Trevenna, as he got into his tilbury.

And he went to eat a second breakfast with Chandos.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### *The Queen of Lilies.*

LADY VALENCIA ST. ALBANS stood beside one of the palms in the conservatory of her sister Lady Chesterton's house. It was the day of the Drawing-Room; she waited for her sister, with her white train carelessly caught over one arm, and a shower of lace and silk falling to the ground and trailing there in a perfumy billowy cloud. She was a picture perfect as the eye could ask or the heart could conceive in the glowing colours of the blossoms round; and a painter would have given her to his canvas as the Ordella or the Evadne of Fletcher's dramas in all their sweet and delicate grace, or, if passion could pass over those luminous thoughtful eyes, as Vittoria Corombona in her royal and imperious beauty.

Passion had never troubled their stillness as yet. Some touch of calamity had indeed cast a shadow on her; the pressure of improvidence and of impoverishment had sent her father to the Roman air that she had breathed so long, and his decease had left her, for an earl's daughter, almost penniless, while his title and estates had passed away to a distant heir male. Her poverty was bitter, terribly bitter, to the Queen of Lilies, daughter of the once splendid house of Ivors. She was little better than

dependent on the generosity of her brother-in-law, Lord Chesterton, and the nature in her was born for the magnificence of dominion, the consciousness of inalienable power.

She stood now under the curled, hanging leaves of the palms, their pale Eastern green contrasting, as though she had been posed there by a painter's skill, with the exquisite colouring of her own beauty, and the snowy, trailing robes that fell about her. Of that beauty she was too proud to be vain; she was simply conscious of it as an empress is conscious of the extent of the sway of her sceptre.

"We're rather early," said her sister, a brusque, abrupt, showy woman. "Who sent you those flowers? Clydesmore? Admirable person, very admirable; great pity he's such a bore. How well you look, Valencia! *On ne pouvait mieux*. Chandos will be at the palace, you know, this morning."

"Are you sure?"

"Perfectly. He is everywhere. It is the most difficult thing to secure his presence at any time. He is so fastidious, too! He has sent me a most courtly note, however. I wrote to say you had just arrived from Rome, and that I would bring you with me to his ball to-night; and there is his answer. It is an immense deal from him!"

Lady Valencia took the white, scented paper her sister tossed to her, and a faint, gratified flush passed over the pure fairness of her face; her lips parted with a slight smile. She had heard so much of the writer—of his fame, of his conquests of his homage to beauty, of his omnipotence in fashion.

"He is very rich, is he not?"

"Rich!" said Lady Chesterton. "A thousand men are

rich; money's made so fast in these days. Chandos is very much more than only rich. He could make us all eat acorns and drink cider, if he chose to set the fashion of it. He rules the *ton* entirely, and lives far more *en roi* than some royalties we know."

"Yes; I heard that in Rome. Men spoke of being 'friends with Chandos,' as they might speak of being invited to the court."

"Chandos gives much greater fashion than the palace ever confers. Bores and parvenus go *there*, but they never visit *him*," responded Lady Chesterton, with an impressive accentuation almost thrilling. "Nothing will ever make him marry, you know. He would hold it in absolute horror. The Princess Marie of Albe is terribly in love with him—almost dying, they say; very beautiful creature she is too, and would bring a magnificent dower."

The Lily Queen smiled slightly, her thoughtful, half-haughty smile. She knew, as though they were uttered aloud, the motives of her sister's little detour into this little sketch of sentiment.

"With so much distinction, he could be raised to the peerage any day, of course!" she inquired, half absently, drawing to her the deep purple bells of an Oriental plant. She declined to pursue the more poetic track, yet she looked a poem herself.

"Raised!" echoed her sister. "My dear, he would call it anything but raised. The Chandos were Marquises of Clarendieux, you remember, until the title was attainted in the Forty-Five. Philip Chandos, the premier, could have had it restored at any time, of course; but he invariably declined. Ernest Chandos is like his father; he would not accept a peerage."

"Not a new one. But he might revive his own."

"He might, of course; nothing would be refused to

him; they would be glad to have him in the Lords. But he has often replied that, like his father, he declines it. He has some peculiar notions, you know; there has been some oath or other taken in the family, I believe, about it—great nonsense, of course—utter Quixotism. But men of genius *are* Quixotic: it never does to contradict them. They are like that mare of mine, Million: give them their head, and they will be sweet-tempered enough—take you over some very queer places sometimes, to be sure, but still tolerably even goers; but once give them a check, they rear and throw you directly. I never disagree with authors, any more than with maniacs.”

With which expression of her compassionate consideration for genius, Lady Chesterton, who was very well known across the grass-countries and with the buck-hounds, shook out her violet velvets and black Spanish laces, well content with the warning she had adroitly conveyed to her sister never to disagree with the eminent leader of society, whom women idolised as they idolised Jermyn and Grammont in the splendid days of Hampton Court.

The Queen of Lilies did not answer; she stood silent, looking still at the note she held, as though the paper could tell her of its writer, while her other hand ruthlessly drew the purple bells of the flower down in a shower at her feet.

“Is he so much spoilt, then? Can he not bear contradiction?” she said at length.

“My dear, he has never tried it,” retorted her sister, with some petulance. “Bear it! of course he would bear it: he is the first gentleman in Europe: but the woman who teased him with it would never see him again. He is so used to being followed, he would not know what it was to be opposed. He is the most graceful, the most

brilliant, the most generous person in the world: at the same time he is the most difficult to please. Guess, yourself, whether a man whose ideal is *Lucrèce* is very likely to be easily enslaved. But it is time to go."

And having cast that arrow to hit her sister's vanity or pique her pride, as it might happen, Lady Chesterton floated out of the drawing-rooms, followed by the Lily Queen, who laid the note down with a lingering farewell glance as she swept away. She had heard much of its writer some years past in Rome, although they had never met; and she had seen his eyes give her an eloquent mute homage the night before—eyes that it was said looked on no woman without awakening love.

"How beautiful his face is!" she thought, recalling the night just passed, and that momentary glance of one long famous to her by reputation. "Lord Clarencieux—Marquis of Clarencieux:—it is a fine title."

"Going to the Drawing-Room?" said Trevenna, entering one of the morning-rooms in Park Lane to take his meditated second breakfast. Chandos was taking his first, the chamber scented and shaded, and cooled with rose-water, and his attendants, Georgian and Circassian girls he had bought in the East and appointed to his household. The world had been a little scandalised at those lovely slaves; but Chandos had soon converted his friends to his own views regarding them. "Why have men to wait on you," he had argued, "when you can have women—soft of foot, soft of voice, and charming to look at? To take your chocolate from James or Adolphe is no gratification at all; to take it from Leila or Zelma is a great one." And his pretty Easterns were certainly irresistible living proofs of the force of his arguments. They were fluttering about him now with silver trays of

coffee, sweetmeats, liqueurs, and fruit, dressed in their Oriental costume, and serving him with most loving obedience. A French duke and two or three Guardsmen were breakfasting with him, playing a lansquenet at noon, from which they had just risen. Men were very fond of coming to take a cup of chocolate from those charming young odalisques.

"Cards at noon, Chandos?" cried Trevenna, as he sauntered in the room, regardless alike of the presence of fashionable men who looked coldly on him, and of the charms of the Turkish attendants. "Fie! fie! The only legitimate gaming before dinner is the sanctioned and sanctified swindling done upon 'Change.'"

"Business is holier than pleasure, I suppose," laughed Chandos. "Business ruins a host of others; pleasure only ruins yourself: of course the world legitimates the first. How are you to-day? Yes, I am going to the Drawing-Room; I am going to see the Queen of Lilies. I will endure the crush and *ennui* of St. James's for her. Take something to eat, Trevenna?"

"All too light and too late for me. I'm a John Bull," said Trevenna, taking a glass of curaçoa, nevertheless, with some Strasbourg *pâté*. "Have you heard the last news of Lady Carallynne?"

"No. Gone off with poor Bodon?"

"Precisely. Went off with him from Lillingstone House last night. Never missed till just now. Carallynne's started in pursuit, swearing to shoot poor Bo dead. Dare say he will, too: 'bon sang ne peut mentir;' it must break the criminal law rather than break its word."

"Hard upon Bo," murmured Cosmo Grenvil of the Coldstreams. "She made such fast running on him, and a fellow can't always say no."



"Well, the mischief's her mother's fault; she made her marry a man she hated," said Chandos, drawing one of the bright braids of the Circassian near him through his hand. "Poor Car! he is quite *à l'antique*: that sort of revenge has gone out with hair-powder, highwaymen, patches, and cock-fighting."

"Beauty of a commercial age: we can turn damaged honour and broken carriage-panels into money, nowadays," said Trevenna. "Carallynne's *rococo*. Liberty all, say I. If my wife runs away with a penniless hussar, why the deuce am I to make a fuss about it? I think *I* should be the gainer far and away."

"*Noblesse oblige*," said Grenvil, softly. "Car don't like his name stained; Old-World prejudice; great bosh, of course, and Mr. Trevenna can't understand the weakness—very naturally."

"Mr. Trevenna doesn't understand it, Lord Cosmo. Why standing up to have an ounce of lead shot into you across a handkerchief should be considered to atone to you for another man's having the amusement of making love to your property, is beyond my practical comprehension. If I were a bellicose fellow, now, I should call *you* out for that pretty speech."

"I only go out with my equals," yawned the handsome Guardsman, indolently turning to resume his flirtation in Turkish with a Georgian.

"Where do you ever find them—for insolence?" said Trevenna, tranquilly.

"Clearly hit, Cos," laughed Chandos, to arrest whatever sharper words might have ensued. "So Lady Car has gone off at last! I declare, Trevenna, you are the most industrious *chiffonnier* for collecting naughty stories that ever existed. You must come across some very dirty

tatters sometimes. I do believe you know everything half an hour before it happens."

"Scandals are like dandelion-seeds," said Trevenna, with the brevity of an Ecclesiasticus. "A breath scatters them to the four winds of heaven; but they are arrow-headed, and stick, where they fall, and bring forth and multiply fourfold."

"And scandals and dandelions are both only weeds that are relished by nothing but donkeys."

"You know nothing at all about either. You don't want scandal for your pastime, nor taraxacum for your liver; but when you are septuagenarian, dyspeptic, and bored, you'll be glad of the assistance of both."

"My dear fellow, what unimaginable horrors you suggest! Whenever I feel the days of darkness coming, I shall gently retire from existence in a warm bath, or breathe in chloroform from a bouquet of heliotrope. The world is a very pleasant club; but, if once it get dull, take your name off the books. Nothing easier; and your friends won't dine the worse."

"Rather the better, if your suicide is piquant. Something to censure, flavours your curry better than all the cayenne. We never enjoy our *entremets* so thoroughly as when we murmur over it, 'Very sad! terribly wrong!' Apropos of censure, even the *Hypercritic* won't censure *you*: there are three columns of superb laudation to *Lucrèce*."

"Never read critiques, my dear Trevenna,—

'Such is our pride, our folly, or our *cru*,  
That only those who cannot write, *review*!'

I am sorry to hear they praise me. I fear, after all, then, I must write very badly. Reviewers puff bad books, as ladies praise plain women."

"To show their own superiority: very likely. How-

ever, whether you please it or not, Jim Jocelyn is so lavish of his milk and honey that the *Hypercritic* will have to atone for his weakness by chopping up novels in vinegar all the rest of the season. I am sure he will expect to dine with you at Richmond."

"Indeed! Then he may continue to—expect it. I neither buy a Boswell with a *bouillabaisse*, nor play Mæcenas by giving a *matelote*. Praise hired with a *pâté*! what a droll state of literature!"

"Not at all. Everything's bought and sold, from the dust of the cinder-heaps to the favour of Heaven—which last little trifle is bid for with all sorts of things, from a piece of plate for the rector, to a new church for St. Paul, it being considered that the Creator of the Universe is peculiarly gratified by small pepper-pots in silver, and big pepper-pots in stucco, as propitiatory and dedicatory offerings. Pooh! everybody's bribed. The only blunder ever made is in the bribe not being suited to the recipient."

"You have suffered from that?"

Trevenna, the imperturbable, laughed as Grenvil dealt him that hit *à la Talleyrand*, murmuring the question in his silkiest, sleepest tone. The Guardsman was a dead foe to the Adventurer.

"I wish I had, Lord Cosmo. I should like to be bribed right and left. It would show I was a 'man of position.' When the world slips *douceurs* into your pocket, things are going very well with you. I can't fancy a more conclusive proof of your success than a host of bribers trying to buy you. But, to be sure, the aristocratic prejudice is in favour of owing money, not of making it."

Which hit the ball back again to his adversary, Cos Grenvil being in debt for everything, from the thousands with which he had paid his Spring Meeting losses to the

fifty-guinea dressing-box he had bought for a pretty *rosière* the day before, as he brought her over from Paris.

"Let that fellow alone, Cos," laughed Chandos, to avert the stormy element which seemed to threaten the serenity of his breakfast-party. "Trevenna will beat us all with his tongue, if we tempt him to try conclusions. He should be a Chancellor of the Exchequer or a cheap John; I am not quite clear which as yet."

"Identically the same things!" cried Trevenna. "The only difference is the scale they are on; one talks from the bench, and the other from the benches; one cheapens tins, and the other cheapens taxes; one has a salve for an incurable disease, and the other a salve for the national debt; one rounds his periods to put off a watch that won't go, and the other to cover a deficit that won't close; but they radically drive the same trade, and both are successful if the spavined mare trots out looking sound, and the people pay up. 'Look what I save you,' cry Cheap John and Chancellor; and while they shout their economics, they pocket their shillings. Ah, if I were sure I could bamboozle a village, I should know I was qualified to make up a Budget."

"And my belief is you could do either or both," laughed Chandos, as he rose with a farewell caress of his hand to the bright braids of gazelle-eyed Leila. "Are you all going? To be sure!—the Drawing-Room, I had forgotten it: we shall be late as it is. *Au revoir*, then, till we meet in a crush. Nothing would take me to that hottest, dullest, drowsiest, frowsiest, and least courtly of courts if it were not for our lovely—what is her name?—Queen of the Lilies."

And Chandos, who glittered at the Tuileries and at Vienna as magnificently as Villiers ever had done before him, and who had a court of his own to which no courts

could give splendour, went to dress for St. James's as his guests left the chamber, pausing a moment himself beside Trevenna.

"Are you coming?"

"I? No! *Mr. John Trevenna* is not an elegant name for a court-list. It would look very *bourgeois* and bare beside the patrician stateliness of *Chandos of Clarencieux*."

For a moment he spoke almost with a snarl, the genuine, bright serenity of his mirthful good temper failing for an instant. Surprised, Chandos laid his hand on his shoulder and looked at him.

"Nonsense! what is the matter with your name? It is a very good one, and I would bet much that you will one day make it a known one. Why should you not attend at the palace to-day? I presented you years ago."

"Yes, you did, *mon prince*," laughed Trevenna, whose ill-humour could not last longer than twenty seconds. "You took me out of prison, and you introduced me to court:—what an antithesis! No! I don't want to come. I always feel so dreadfully like a butler in silk stockings and tights; and I don't care about creeping in at the tail of a list in the morning papers. It's not elevating to your vanity to bring up the rear, like the spiders in a child's procession of Noah's Ark animals."

"Poor fellow! He has brains enough to be premier, and he is nothing but a penniless man-on-the-town," thought Chandos, as he entered the dressing-room and put himself in the hands of his body-servants to dress for the court. "A better temper never breathed, but it sometimes galls him, I dare say, not to occupy a higher place. I have been too selfish about him: giving him money and giving him dinners is not enough to deal fairly by him: he ought to be put forward. I will try and get him into the House. I could have a pocket-borough for him from

some of them; and he could be trusted to make his own way there. His style would suit St. Stephen's; he would always be pungent, and never be metaphorical; he is too good a scholar to offend their taste, and too shrewd a tactician to alarm them with genius."

And revolving plans for the welfare and advancement of his *fidus Achates*, Chandos dressed and went down to his carriage. Trevenna looked out of one of the windows, and watched the gay elegance of the equipage as it swept away.

"Go to the palace, my brilliant courtier," he said to himself, while his teeth set like the teeth of a bulldog, strong, fine, white teeth, that clenched close. "Men as graceful and as glittering even as you went by the dozens to Versailles in their lace and their diamonds, to end their days behind the bars of La Force or on the red throne of the guillotine. My dainty gentlemen, my gallant aristocrats, my gilded butterflies! 'Rira bien qui rira le dernier.' Do you think I amuse you all now not to *use* you all by-and-by? We're not at the end of the comedy yet. I am your Triboulet, your Chicot, whose wit must never tire and whose blood must never boil; but I may outwit you yet under the cap and bells. '*La vengeance est boiteuse; elle vient à pas lents; mais—elle vient!*' And what a comfort that is!"

This was the solitary weakness in his virile and energetic nature—a nature otherwise strong as bronze and unyielding as granite—this envy, intense to passion, morbid to womanishness, vivid to exaggeration of all these symbols, appanages, and privileges of rank. Chiefly, of course, he envied them for that of which they were the insignia and the producer; but, beyond this, he envied them themselves, envied every trifle of their distinction with as acute and as feminine a jealousy as ever rankled

in a woman's heart for the baubles and the flatteries she cannot attain. It was a weakness, and one curiously and deeply graven into his temperament, in all other respects so bright, so shrewd, so practical, and so dauntless.

As he turned from the casement, the retriever, Beau Sire, standing near, fixed his brown eyes on him and growled a fierce, short growl of defiance. Trevenna looked at him and laughed.

"Curse you, dog! You needn't be jealous of me, Beau Sire: *I* don't love your master."

Nevertheless, Trevenna rang the bell, and ordered some of the best clarets of Beau Sire's master to be brought for his own drinking, and took his luncheon in solitude. He offered Beau Sire the dog's favourite *bonne bouche*, the liver-wing of a pheasant; but Beau Sire showed his teeth, and refused to touch it, with a superb canine scorn.

"You've more discrimination than your master, O you Lavater among retrievers! *You* know his foes: *he* doesn't," laughed Trevenna, while he finished his luncheon with the finer appreciation of Dubosc's talent, and of the oily perfections of the hock and the mareschino, because of his previous asceticism over a mutton-chop.

"You are safe for the Cup, Ernest?" said his Grace of Castlemaine, as they encountered each other in the press of the reception-room at the palace. The duke was a very old man, but he was as superb a gentleman as any in Europe, a gallant soldier, a splendid noble still, with his lion-like mane of silken silver hair and his blue and flashing eyes, as he stood now in his Field-Marshal's uniform, with the Garter ribbon crossing his chest, and stars and orders innumerable on his heart, above the scars of breast-wounds gained at Vittoria and in many a cavalry-charge in Spain.

"Safe? Oh, yes. There is nothing in any of the establishments to be looked at beside Galahad," answered Chandos, between whom and the duke there was always a sincere and cordial affection. They were alike in many things.

"No: at least it must be kept very dark if there be. By the way, there was a man—a thorough scamp, but a very good judge of a horse—offering very widely at Tattersall's to-day on a chestnut, Diadem. I know the fellow: he got into difficulties years ago, at the time of the White Duchess scandal: she was carted out stiff as a stake on the St. Leger morning, and it was always suspected he poisoned her; but he would know what he was about, and he offered long odds on the chestnut."

"Diadem?" repeated Chandos, whose eyes were glancing over the many-coloured sea about him of feathers, jewels, floating trains, military orders, and heavy epaulets, to seek out the Queen of the Lilies. "Diadem? You mean an outsider, entered by a Yorkshire man? My dear duke, he is the most wretched animal, I hear. Trevenna tells me he could not win in a Consolation scramble."

"Humph! may-be. You never scarcely go to the Corner yourself?"

"Very rarely. I like to keep up the honour of the Clarencieux establishment; but of all abominations the slang of the stable is the most tedious. Trevenna manages all that for me, you know."

"Yes, I know. Clever fellow, very clever; but I never liked him. Nothing but an adventurer."

"For shame, duke! *You* should not use that word. It is the last resource of mediocrity when it can find nothing worse to cast against excellence."

"Believe in people, my dear Chandos; believe in them!



You will find it so profitable!" murmured his Grace, as the press of the crowd swept them asunder.

From the Guardsmen, who, to their own discomfiture, had formed the escort, and were drawn up with their troop outside to catch but fugitive glimpses of fair faces as the carriages passed, to the ministers in the Throne-room, whose thoughts were usually too prosaically bent on questions of supply or votes of want of confidence to turn much to these vanities, there was one predominant and heightened expectation—the sight of the Queen of the Lilies. Rumour had long floated from Rome of her extraordinary loveliness; poets had sung it, sculptors immortalised it, and artists adored it there. Chandos now waited for it impatiently where he stood among the circle of princes, peers, and statesmen about the throne. His loves had been countless, always successful, never embittered, intensely impassioned while they lasted, swiftly awakened, and often as rapidly inconstant. The very facility with which his vows were heard made them as easily broken: he loved passionately, but he loved so many! The eyes that he had last looked on were always the stars that guided him. A woman would very likely have told him that he had never really loved: he would have told her that he had loved a thousand times. And he would have been more right than she. Love is no more eternal than the roses, but, like the roses, it renews with every summer sun in as fair a fragrance as it bloomed before.

Women only rebel against this truth because *their* season of the roses—their youth—is so short.

At last the delicate white robes swept by him; thrown out from the maze of gorgeous colour, of gleaming gold, of diamonds and sapphires, of purples fit for Titian, of rubies fit for Rubens, of azure, of scarlet, of amber, filling

the chamber, like a cameo from the deep hues of an illuminated background, the Athenian-like fairness of her face glanced once more on his sight: she was close to him as she swept towards the throne.

"She is fit, herself, for the throne of the Cæsars," he thought, as he followed the slow soft movements of her imperial grace. Once again their eyes met, she saw him where he stood among the royal and titled groups about the dais, and a slight flush rose over her brow—a flush that, if it betrayed her, was hidden as she bowed her proud young head before her sovereign, yet not hidden so soon but that he caught it.

"Passionless! They must wrong her; they have not known how to stir her heart," he thought, as he followed her with his glance still as she passed onward and out of the Throne-room. Her remembrance haunted him in the palace: for the first time he thrust such a remembrance away. "Bagatelle!" he thought, as he threw himself back among his carriage-cushions and drove to Flora de l'Orme's. "Let me keep to beauty that I can win at no cost but a set of emeralds or a toy-villa: the payment for *hers* would be far too dear. Heloïse was right."

"Brilliant affair! More like a *fête à la Régence* than anything else. How the money goes! The cost of one of those nights would buy *me* a seat in the House," thought Trevenna that evening, as he passed up the staircase of Park Lane.

The dinners and suppers of the Richmond villa, in all their gaiety and extravagance, were not more famous with Anonyma and her sisterhood, than the entertainments to the aristocratic world with which Chandos, in Paris and Naples, revived all the splendour of both Regencies, and outshone in his own houses the gatherings of imperial

courts, were celebrated in that *crème de la crème* which alone were summoned to them. The *fêtes* that he gave abroad he gave in England, startling society with their novelty and their magnificence. Chandos showed that the Art of Pleasure was not dead. To-night all that was highest in both the French and English aristocracies came to a costume-ball that was also at pleasure a masked-ball, and professedly in imitation of the Veglione of Florentine carnivals.

Trevenna paused a moment near the entrance of the reception-rooms, where he could see both the constantly increasing throng that ascended the stairs and the long perspective of the chambers beyond, that ended in the dark palm-groups, the masses of tropic flowers, and the columns and sheets of glancing water foaming in the light of the winter-garden in the distance. Masked himself, and dressed simply in a dark violet domino, he looked down through the pageant of colour, fused into one rich glow by the lustre that streamed from a hundred chandeliers, from a thousand points of illumination, till his eyes found and rested on Chandos, who, with the famed Clarencieux diamonds glittering at every point of his costume, as Edward the Fourth, stood far off in an inner drawing-room, receiving his guests as they arrived.

"Ah, my White Rose!" said Trevenna to himself, "how the women love you, and how the world loves you, and how lightly you wear your crown! Edward himself had not brighter gold in his hair, nor fairer loves to his fancy. Well, you have some Plantagenet blood, they say, in that *sangre azul* of your gentleman's veins, and the Plantagenets were always dazzling and—doomed."

With which historical reminiscence drifting through his thoughts, Trevenna drew himself a little back, farther into the shelter of an alcove filled with broad-leaved Mexi-

can plants, and studied the scene at his leisure. There was a certain savage envy and a certain luscious satisfaction mingled together in the contemplation.

"The fools that go to see comedies, and read novels and satires, while they can look on at Life!" thought Trevenna, who was never weary of watching that mingling of comedy and melodrama, though his genius was rather the loquacious than the meditative. "I can't picture greater fun than to have been a weather-wise philosopher who knew what Vesuvius was going to do, told nobody anything, but took a stroll through Pompeii on the last day, while his skiff waited for him in the bay. Fancy seeing the misers clutch their gold, while he knew they'd offer it all for bare life in an hour; the lovers swear to love for eternity, while he knew their lips would be cold before night; the bakers put the loaves in the oven, while he knew nobody would ever take them out; the epicures order their prandium, while he knew their mouths would be chokefull of ashes; the throngs pour into the circus, laughing and eager, while he knew they poured into their grave; the city gay in the sunshine, while he knew that the lava-flood would swamp it all before sunset. *That* would have been a comedy worth seeing. Well, I can fancy it a little. My graceful Pompeian, who know nothing but the rose-wreaths of Aglaë and Astarte, how will you like the stones and the dust in your teeth?"

And Trevenna, pausing a moment to enjoy to its fullest the classical tableau he had called up in his mind's eye, and looking still at the friend whom he had alternately apostrophised as Plantagenet and Pompeian, left his alcove and his reverie to mingle with the titled crowd in his dark domino and his close Venetian mask, casting an epigram here, a scandal there, a suspicion in this place, a slander in that, blowing away a reputation as lightly

as thistle-down, and sowing a seed of disunion between two lives that loved, with dexterous whispers under his disguise that could never be traced, and as amused a malice in the employment as any Siamese monkey when he swings himself by his tail from bough to bough to provoke the crocodiles to exasperation. True, as monkey may get eaten for his fun, so Trevenna might get found out for his pastime; but, to both monkey and man, the minimum of danger with the maximum of mischief made a temptation that was irresistible. Trevenna had been the most mischievous boy that ever tormented tom-cats; he was now the most mischievous wit that ever tormented mankind.

He was a moral man; he had no vices; he had only one weakness—he hated humanity.

“How extravagant you are, Ernest!” said the Duke of Castlemaine. “Do you think these people love you any the better for all you throw away on them, eh?”

“Love me? Well, the fairer section do, I hope.”

The Duke gave another little growl to himself as he brushed a moth off his broad blue ribbon.

“Ah! women were always the ruin of your race and of mine: you have the weakness from both sides, Ernest. There was your father——”

“Who was a deucedly proud man, wasn’t he, duke?” asked Trevenna, with scant ceremony, as he came up by Castlemaine’s side, without his mask now, and having glided into a blue domino, that his gunpowder-whispers might not be traced to him.

The Duke looked down on him from the tower of his height, scarce bent more than when he was a Colonel of cavalry at Salamanca.

“Proud? Perhaps so, sir. Adventurers thought him

so. He put down impudence wherever he met with it. It is a pity he is not alive now."

"To put *me* down? I understand, duke," laughed Trevenna, impervious to satire, and impenetrable even to a cut direct, who caught every bullet sent against him, gaily and courageously, and played with it unharmed as a conjurer will. (What magic has the conjurer? None; but he has one trick more than the world that he baffles.) "Ah! I can't let myself be put down; I'm like a cork or an outrigger; all my safety lies in my buoyancy. I have no ballast; I must float as I can. Storms sink ships of the line, and spare straws."

"Yes, sir, rubbish floats generally, I believe," said his Grace, grimly, turning his back on him as he took out his snuff-box, enamelled by Pettitot and given him by Charles Dix. Trevenna bowed as low as though the silver-haired Sabreur had paid him a compliment and had *not* turned his back on him.

"I accept your Grace's prophecy. Rubbish floats; *I* shall float. And when I am at the top of the wave, won't every one call my dirtiest pebbles fine pearls?"

"I think he will float," murmured the Duke, passing outward through the rooms to the noiseless, shut-off, luxurious chamber dedicated to cards, which had an altar in Chandos' house, as if they were its Penates. "Sort of man to do well anywhere; be a privileged wit in a palace, and chief demagogue in a revolution; be merry in a bagne, and give a pat answer if he were tried for his life; hold his own in a cabinet, and thrive in the bush. A clever fellow, an audacious fellow, a most marvellous, impudent fellow."

"An insufferable fellow! I wish Chandos would not give him the run of the house, and the run of the town, as he does," said my Lord of Morehampton, wending his

way also to the card-rooms. "The man has no idea of his place."

"I think he has only too good a one: he imagines it to be—everywhere. But the fellow will do well. He plays so admirable a game at whist; leads trumps in the bold French manner, which has a great deal to be said for it; has an astonishing recuperative power; if one play will not serve, changes his attack and defence with amazing address, and does more with a wretched hand than half the players in the clubs do with a good one. A man who can play whist like that could command a kingdom; he has learnt to be ready for every position and for every emergency. Still, with you, I don't like him," said his Grace, entering the card-room to devote himself to his favourite science at guinea points, where, despite his inherent aversion to Trevenna, he would have been willing to have that inimitable master of the rubber for a partner.

The Duke was quite right, that a man who has trained his intellect to perfection in whist has trained it to be capable of achieving anything that the world could offer. A campaign does not need more combination; a cabinet does not require more address; an astronomer-royal does not solve finer problems; a continental diplomatist does not prove greater tact. Trevenna had laid out the time he spent over its green table even more profitably for the ripening and refining of his intelligence than in the hours he gave to his blue-books; and the Duke's eulogy was but just.

His rooms were nearly full, but Chandos still glanced every now and then impatiently towards the entrance-doors that opened in the distance to the staircase. Eyes that might well claim to be load-stars wooed him through coquettish Venetian masks, and faces too fair for that envious disguise met his gaze wherever it turned. On his

ear at that moment was the silvery ring of La Vivarol's gay raillery, and at his side was that bright exile of the Tuileries, fluttering her sapphire-studded wings as a *Fille des Feux*. Still ever and again his eyes turned towards the entrance as he moved among his guests, and suddenly a new look glanced into them. She who held him captive at that moment saw that look, and knew it well. She had seen it lighten for her in the forests of Compiègne when the summer moon had streamed down through the leaves on a royal hunting-party sweeping through the glades to the mellow music of hunting-horns, and they had lingered behind while the bridles dropped on their horses' necks, and only the wooing of soft words broke the silence as the hoofs sank noiselessly in the deep thyme-tangled grasses.

She knew the look of old, and followed it. It rested on the Queen of Lilies.

If that poetic loveliness had been fair in the morning light, it was far fairer now. By a delicate flattery to her host the Lily Queen had chosen as her impersonation the rôle of his own *Lucrèce*, a Byzantine Greek; and her dress, half Eastern, glowed with the brightness of Oriental hues, while the snow-white barracan floated round her like a cloud, and Byzantine jewels gleamed upon her bosom and her hair—jewels that had seen the Court of the Commeni and the sack of Dandolo—jewels that had once, perhaps, been on the proud, false brow of the Imperial Irene.

La Vivarol looked, and did not underrate one in whom she foresaw her rival.

"Ah, there is your living *Lucrèce*! It must be charming to sketch characters and find them come to life."

Chandos lost the ironic and malicious contempt with which jealousy subtly tipped the tone of the words, as, leaving the Countess to the homage of the maskers about her, he did for the Queen of Lilies what he had not done



for any other—passed out of the inner drawing-room, where he received his guests, and advanced to meet the impersonation of his *Lucrèce*.

That moment was fatal to him—that moment in which she came on his sight as startling as though magic had summoned the living shape of his own fancies and breathed the breath of existence into the thoughts of his poem. He could never now see her as she was; he would see in her his own ideal, not asking whether she only resembled it as the jeweller's lily with petals of pearl and leaves of emerald, which gleams equally bright in every hand, resembles the forest-lily with its perfume and purity, growing fair and free under the sunshine of heaven, which dies under one ungente and alien touch.

The lilies may be alike, leaf for leaf, beauty for beauty, but the fragrance is breathed but from one.

"Necromancers of old summoned the dead; you have done more, Lady Valencia, you have caught and incarnated an idler's dream. How can he ever thank you?" he said, later on, as he led her into the winter-garden, where the light was subdued after the glitter of the *salons*, and the hum of the ball with the strains of the music were only half heard, and through the arching aisles of palm and exotics his Circassian attendants noiselessly flitted like so many bright-hued birds.

She smiled, while a new lustre came into the thoughtful splendour of her eyes. Her heart was moved—or her pride.

"I must rather thank you that you do not rebuke me for being too rash. I assure you that I feared my own temerity."

"What fear could you have, save out of pity for others? My fairest fancies of *Lucrèce* are embodied now—perhaps only too well. What made you divine so entirely

the woman I dreamt of? She only floated dimly even through my thoughts, until I saw her to-night."

"Hush! That is the language of compliment. I have heard how delicately and how dangerously you will flatter."

"Indeed, no: you have heard wrongly. I never flatter. But there are some—you are one of them—to whom the simplest words of truth must needs sound the words of an exaggerated homage."

All love in Chandos had been quickly roused, rather from the senses and the fancy than the heart, and roused for those to whom there was a royal road, pursued at no heavier penalty than some slight entanglement. That this royal road could not avail with the Queen of Lilies chilled her charm, yet heightened it, as it lay like a light but unyielding rein, checking the admiration she roused in him, yet not checking it so much but that she enchained his attention while she remained in his rooms, while the bright eyes of his neglected *Fille des Feux*, kept dangerous account of the *lèse-majesté*.

La Vivarol fluttered her golden wings, and waltzed as though they really bore her, bird-like, through the air, and flirted with her most glittering coquetries; but she noted every glance that was given to another, and treasured the trifles of each slight infidelity.

If a Viardot, a court-coquette, a woman of the world, an aristocrat, could be guilty of so much weakness, she had loved Chandos—loved the brilliance of the eyes that looked into hers under the purple vine-shadows—loved the melody of the voice that had lingered on her ear in the orange-alleys of Fontainebleau—loved him if only because so many loved him in vain. And far more than her heart was involved in his allegiance; a thing far dearer to her, far closer and more precious to all women—her vanity.

If any one had talked to the pretty, worldly, pampered, and little-scrupulous Countess of fidelity, she would have satirised him mercilessly for such provinciality, and would have asked him where he had lived that he thought the vows of the soft religion eternal. She was infidelity itself, and held to the right divine of caprice; talk of "for ever," and she would yawn with *ennui*; appeal to her reason, and she would cordially assent to the truth that "*nous sommes bien aises que l'on devienne infidèle pour nous dégager de notre fidélité.*" But, alas for the consistency of fair philosophers! Madame applied her theories to all lovers except her own, and, while she was eloquent on the ridicule and the weariness of constancy, held inconstancy to herself as the darkest of treason.

La Vivarol, whose breviary was Rochefoucauld, and whose precursor was Montespan, philosophised inimitably on the rights of inconstancy, but was none the less prepared to avenge and to resent with all the force of a Corsican vendetta any homage that should dare wander from her.

And to-night she was openly, visibly, unmistakably *neglected*. The gleam of those antique Byzantine jewels was the light that he followed. In this new loveliness, so rich in its colouring, so proud in its cast, yet delicate as the fairest thought of a sculptor when rendered into the purity of the marble, he saw the portraiture of an ideal, half idly, half passionately cast into words in the work he called *Lucrèce*, that had been chiefly written in hot, dreamy days in the syringa and basilica-scented air of his summer palace on the Bosphorus, and had caught in it all the voluptuous colour, all the mystical enchantment, all the *splendida vitia* of glow and of fancy, that still belong to the mere name of the East. She was no longer the beauty of the season to him; she was the in-

carnation of his own most golden and most treasured fancies. Side by side in his temperament with the nature of the voluptuary was the heart of the poet. She appealed to, and tempted, both. Since the days of his first loves, felt and whispered under Oriental stars to antelope-eyed Georgians, none had had so vivid a charm as this soft yet imperial beauty, who came to him in the guise of his heroine. And he let the world see it.

"If Madame live twenty years, Chandos, she will never forgive you to-night," whispered Trevenna, in passing, as his host ascended the staircase, having escorted the Lady Valencia to her carriage, while a crowd of glittering costumés and maskers followed her footsteps,—a ceremonial he never showed except to those of blood royal.

"Forgive me! What have I done?"

"What! O most innocent Lovelace, what serene sublimity of ignorance! You have piqued a jealous woman, *très-cher*; and he who does that might as well have sat down upon a barrel of gunpowder: it is much the less fatal combustible of the two."

"Nonsense! We are none of us jealous now: everybody is too languid and too well bred."

Chandos laughed, and passed on into the throng of his courtly maskers to seek the golden wings and falcon eyes of his liege lady, and make his peace with her, as far as it could be made without offending her more deeply by showing her a suspicion that the peace had ever been broken.

Trevenna looked after him, watching the flash of the jewels on his dress, and the careless grace of his movements as he passed through the groups of his drawing-rooms; and Trevenna's eyes wandered downward through the blaze of light, and the wilderness of clustered

flowers, along the whole line of the marble stairs with their broad scarlet carpeting into the depths of the hall, where at the farthest end, with the lustre from two giant candelabra full upon it, was the statue of the great minister, Philip Chandos.

His glance wandered from the living man, with the living flash of the rose-diamonds about him like so many points of sunlight, to rest upon the cold, haughty serenity of power that was spoken in the attitude of the marble limbs and the traits of the marble features in that likeness of the dead.

And he smiled a little.

"*Beaux seigneurs*," he said, softly and low to himself, "there may be games at which you will not win. Ah, my great Chandos, how you stand there in your marble pride as if you could lord it over us all still! and a stone-mason's hammer could knock you to pieces now! *Sic transit gloria mundi*. Your darling Ernest is a brilliant man; you have your wish; but we may sing the old see-saw over him too, before very long. And what will the world care for him then?"

With which inquiry, mutely addressed in self-communion to the statue where it stood in the flood of light and maze of exotics in the great hall below, Trevenna went down-stairs and out to his night-cab as the spring morning broke in its earliest hours.

He looked back as he waited a second in the portico for the cab to make its way up to him. The music came on his ear from the distant ball-room, and as he glanced backward at the hall and staircase, with its bronzes, marbles, malachites, jasper, gold and silver candelabra, and clusters of blossom and of broad-leaved Southern shrubs, while the scarlet of the laced liveries gleamed through the boughs and made it like one of the palace-

antechamber scenes of Paul Veronese's canvas, the statue rose white, calm, regal in its attitude of command, haughty as had been the life of which it was the mute and breathless symbol.

"Curse you!" he muttered in his teeth, while the laugh passed off his face and the mirth out of his eyes. "Curse you living, and curse you dead! I will be paid, like Shylock, with a pound of flesh cut from the heart,—from the heart of your brilliant darling. And your power cannot play the part of Portia and stop *me*; for you are dead, *mon ministre!*"

And with that valediction to the dwelling across whose threshold he was ever welcomed and to whose board he was ever bidden, Trevenna passed down the steps and drove away in the grey of the morning.

## CHAPTER V.

"The many Years of Pain that taught me Art."

WHEN his guests had left, and all the costumes that had glittered through his *salons* had dispersed, some half-dozen men, his most especial friends, remained, and in a *cabinet de peinture*, hung chiefly with French pictures of the eighteenth century, while the Circassians brought them wines and liqueurs, sat down to *Trente et Quarante*, half of them taking the bank and half the table. It was a customary termination of Chandos' parties, and was at least an admirable stimulant for sweeping away too lingering memories of beauty that might have appeared there.

The Chandos of Clarencieux had always been famed for their love of play, from the days that they shook the dice with Charles the Second, or threw a main before supper at Choisy with Louis and Richelieu and Soubise. But his love of cards, however great it might be, had not

cost their present representative so much as another trait in his nature, *i. e.* that he loved men and trusted them with an absolute and undoubting faith.

The *Trente et Quarante* in the little picture-cabinet was too beguiling to be quickly left; the gold changed hands like lightning, not going less quickly for the iced hock and the claret and seltzer that washed it down, and the gay passages with the pretty Easterns that interrupted it. It was past six in the morning when the Duc D'Orv le broke up the bank and gave the signal for departure, he with Chandos having been the chief losers. The latter cared only for the gay excitement of hazard; when the game was over, whether it had been favourable to him or not, he cared not one straw. Generous to great excess, he never heeded the loss of money, as, it is true, he had never learned the value of it.

As he went through the corridors to his own chamber, after his guests had at last left him, to take a few hours' sleep in the opening day, the deep, rich, melancholy roll of organ-notes, hushed by closed doors, but pealing the *Tantum Ergo*, caught his ear in the silence. Music had been a passion with him from his infancy; wealth had enabled him to indulge the passion to the full, and its strains drew him towards it now.

"Lulli is beginning a new day while we are going to bed," he thought, as he turned down a short passage and opened the door that shut in the melody. The daylight in the chamber looked strangely white and pure and subdued after the glare of the myriad gas and wax lights; and his form, with the rich silks, laces, and velvets of the Edward-the-Fourth dress, and the sparkle of the Clarencieux diamonds, looked as strange upon the threshold of this quiet and antique room,—a room almost like an oratory in the midst of the luxurious palatial Park

Lane house, with its splendour, its crowds, its dissipations, and its unending gaieties. The apartment was long, lighted by two windows, through which the just-arisen sun poured in, and the antique shape of the walnut-wood furniture, the ebony music and reading-desks, and the carved ivory Christ above a table in a recess, gave it the look of a religious retreat, especially as at the farther end stood an organ, with its gilded tubes glistening against the dark walnut of its case, while from its chords there swelled the harmony of the great Sacramental Hymn.

The musician was a man of five or six-and-twenty, whose head had the spiritual beauty of Shelley's; the features fair and delicate to attenuation; the eyes large, dark, and lustrous; the mouth very perfect, both in form and expression; the whole face of singular patience and singular exaltation. His lower limbs were all-but useless, they were slightly paralysed and much crippled, and his shoulders were bowed with a marked but in no way repulsive deformity. Music grand as Beethoven ever dreamed or Pasta ever sang woke from his genius into life. But in the ways of the world Guido Lulli was unlearned as a child; for the labours of earth he was as helpless as any bird whose wings are broken. Men would have called him a half-witted fool; in the days of Alcuin or of Hildebrand he would have been held a saint; simply, he was but a cripple and an enthusiast, whom nature had cruelly maltreated, but whom genius had divinely recompensed.

At the opening of the door he turned, and a radiation of pleasure broke like sunlight over his face, while into his eyes came the glorious look of love and of fidelity that beams for us in the clear brown noble eyes of a dog.

He strove to rise,—to him a matter of so slow and painful an effort. Before he could do so, Chandos crossed the room lightly and swiftly, and laid his hands on the



musician's shoulders with a kind and almost caressing gesture.

"Ah, Lulli! you are awake and employed before I have yet been in bed. You shame me here with your flood of sunlight. No! do not rise; do not leave off; go on with the *Tantum Ergo* while I listen. It is a grand hymn to the day."

Lulli looked at him still with that loving, reverent, grateful look of a dog's deathless fidelity.

"Monseigneur, the sound of your voice to me is like the sound of water to the thirsty in a desert place," he said, simply, in sweet, soft, Southern French, giving, in earnest veneration to his host and master, the title that Trevenna often gave in jest.

Chandos smiled on him,—a sunlit, generous smile, gentle as a woman's.

"And so is your music to me; so there is no debt on either side. Go on."

"My life is one long debt to you. God will pay it to you: I never can."

The words were heartfelt, and his eyes, looking upward, still uttered them with still more eloquence. Contrast more forcible than these, as they were now together, could scarcely have been found in the width of the world. The attenuated and enfeebled cripple, with his useless limbs, his bowed shoulders, and his life worn with physical suffering that bound him like a captive and robbed him of all the power and the joy of existence, beside the splendid grace of the man who stood above him, in a strength too perfect for dissipation to leave the slightest trace of weariness upon it, and with a beauty dazzling as a woman's, fresh from every pleasure of the sight or sense, and full of all the proudest ambitions, the richest enjoyments, and the most careless *insouciance* of a superb

manhood and a cloudless fortune. A contrast more startling or, for one, more bitter could not have been placed side by side. But there was no envy *here*. The loyal gratitude of Lulli had no jealous taint upon it that could have made him, even for one moment, see anything save gladness and gentleness in the gracious presence of the man to whom he owed more than existence. He could no more have felt envy to his benefactor than he could have taken up a knife and stabbed him.

Six years before, travelling through southern Spain, an accident to his carriage had detained Chandos at a wayside inn in the very heart of the Vega. Whiling away the tedium of such detention by sketching an old Moorish bridge that spanned a torrent, high in air, he heard some music that fixed his attention,—the music of a violin played with an exquisite pathos. He inquired for the musician. A handsome gitana, with a basket of melons on her head, gladly answered his inquiries. The violinist was a youth dying, as she thought, in a *châlet* near. He was alone, very poor, and a stranger. The words were sufficient to arrest Chandos: he sought out the *châlet* and found the musician, lying on a straw pallet, and dying, as the girl had said, rather from hunger than any other illness, but with his large burning eyes fixed on the sun that was setting beyond the screen of tangled vine-leaves that hung over the hut door, and his hands still drawing from the chords, in wild and mournful strains, the music for which life alone lingered in him. He was a mere lad of twenty years, and was a cripple. Chandos only saw to rescue him. Food, hope, and the sound of a voice that spoke gently and pityingly to him, fused fresh existence into the dying boy: he lived, and his life from that moment was sheltered by the man who had found him perishing on the Spanish hills.

Guido Lulli had lived in Chandos' household, never treated as a dependent, but surrounded by all that could alleviate or make him forget his calamity, out of the world by his own choice as utterly as though he were in a monastery, spending his days and nights over his organ and his music-score, and never having harder task than to organise the music of those concerts and operas in the private theatre at Clarendieux for which his patron's entertainments were noted.

Guido Lulli's was far from the only life that the pleasure-seeker and the voluptuary had redeemed, defended, and saved.

Obedient to his wish, the melody of the Catholic chant rolled through the stillness of the early morning, succeeding strangely to the wit, the laughter, the revelry, and the hazard of a few moments previous. It was precisely such a succession of contrasts of which his life was made up, and which gave it its vivid and unfading colour, closely interwoven, and ever trenching one upon another, the meditative charm of art and of thought succeeded with him to the pleasures of the world. He would pass from all the intoxication and indulgence of an Alcibiades to all the thoughtful solitude of an Augustine; and it was this change, so complete and so perpetually variable, which, while it was produced by the mutability of his temperament, made in a large degree the utter absence in his life of all knowledge of satiety, all touch of weariness.

He listened now, leaning his arm on the sill of the open window that looked out upon the gardens below, fresh, even in town, with the breath of the spring on their limes and acacias, and the waking song of the nest-birds greeting the day. The rolling notes of the organ pealed out in all their solemnity, the cathedral rhythm swelling out upon the silence of the dawn, that had been heard

by him so often in the splendour of St. Peter's at Easter-time, in the hush of Notre Dame at midnight mass, and in the stillness of Benedictine and Cistercian chapels in the chestnut-woods of Tuscany and the lonely mountainsides of hill-locked Austrian lakes. A thousand memories of foreign air were in the deep-drawn and melodious chords; a thousand echoes of the dead glories of mediæval Rome rose with the

"Tantum ergo Sacramentum  
Veneremur cernui."

A helpless and fragile cripple in the world, no stronger than a reed, and ignorant of all things save his art, once before his organ, once in the moment of his inspiration, Guido Lulli had the grandeur of a master, the force and the omnipotence of a king. In his realm he reigned supreme, and Chandos not seldom left his titled associates and his careless pleasures to come and listen to these melodies in his *protégé's* still, monastical chamber, as he heard them now.

He leaned against the embrasure, looking out on to the mass of leaves beneath, and letting his thoughts float dreamily down the stream of sound, blent with the lustre of the smiling eyes and the gleam of the imperial beauty that had newly caught his memory and his fancy. Entangled with the imaginations of his own Byzantine poem, she haunted him with that early careless whisper, soft, idle, and painless, of love in its first moments,—love that is but a mere momentary, passionate impulse, and may never ripen to more.

The lull of early morning, the measure of the music passing onward without pause into the masses of Mozart and Mendelssohn, fell gently and mellowly on him after the crowded hours of the past night and day. As the chords thrilled through the silence of the breaking day,

joining the clear notes of the awakening birds beneath amidst the leaves, his thoughts wandered away, dreamy and disconnected, ranging over the cloudless years of a successful life, in which all the memories were painted as with an Elizabethan pencil, without shadow. In them he had never known one grey touch of disappointment, far less still one dark taint of calamity; in them woman's lips had never betrayed him, nor man's hand been raised against him. Fortune had favoured and the world had loved him. No regret lay on him, and no unfulfilled desire left its trail. There was nothing in his career he wished undone; there were no memories in it that it would have been pain to open; there were no pages of it that were not bright with soft, rich, living colour. He had passed through life having escaped singularly all the shadows that lie on it for most men; and he had, far more than most, what may be termed the faculty for happiness, a gift, in any temperament, whose wisdom and whose beauty the world too little recognises.

His thoughts, floating on with the melodious chords that swelled in wave on wave of sound through the quiet of the morning, drifted back by some unfollowed chain of association to the remembrance of the hot autumn sunset at Clarendieux, when, as a child, he had dreamt his chivalric fancies over the story of Arthur, and had told his father what his future should be.

"Have I kept my word?" he mused, as he leaned his arms on the embrasure of the window, while the early light fell on the gold and the jewels of his Plantagenet masquerade-dress.

The lofty, idealic, impossible dreams, so glorious in their impracticability, so fair in their sublime folly, in which boyhood had aspired to a soiless fame and an heroic sovereignty such as this earth has never seen and

never can see, recurred to him with something that was almost, for the moment, a passing sadness,—the same sadness which, in the words of Jean Paul, lies in music, “because it speaks to us of things that in all our life we find not, and never shall find.”

“Have I kept my word?” he thought. “I rule the world of pleasure; but I meant *then* a wider world than that. They follow me because I lead the fashion; because I amuse them better than any other; because they gain some distinction by cutting their coats and wearing their wrist-bands like mine; but that is not the fame either he or I meant in those years. They talk of me; they imitate me; they obey me; they quote me; they adore my works, and they court my approbation. But am I very much more, after all, than a mere idler?”

The genius latent in him, which in his present life only found careless expression in glittering bagatelles and poems, half Lucretian, half Catullan, stirred in him now with that restlessness for higher goals, that refusal to be satisfied with actual and present achievement, which characterise genius in all its forms,—that unceasing and irrepressible “striving towards the light” which pursued Goethe throughout life, and was upon his lips in death. Dissatisfaction in no shape ever touched Chandos; his years were too cloudless, and too full of fairest flavour, for discontent ever to be known in them. It was but rarely, now and then, when, in the pauses of his pleasures and his fame, the remembrance of his childhood’s grand, visionary, impalpable ambitions came back to him, that the thought swept across him of having insufficiently realised them, of having been in some sort untrue to them, of losing in a dazzling celebrity the loftier purity of those early and impossible dreams.

It was not wholly true, nor wholly just towards him-

self. Egotism had little place in his life: full though it was of a Greek-like softness and Greek-like idolatry of beauty and of pleasure, of an Epicureanism that shunned all pain and abhorred all roughness and all harshness, the calamities of others were widely succoured by him, and the bead-roll was long of those who owed him the most generous gifts that man can owe to man.

He enjoyed, but he never forgot that others suffered. He loved the ease, the beauty, and the serenity of existence; but he also did his uttermost that others should know them too.

"*I enjoy,*" he thought now, as he leaned out into the morning sunshine. "It is the supreme wisdom of life, and the best gift of the gods is to know it! The Greeks were right, and in this age men remember it too little. Old Guy Patin was a million times wiser than all the Frondeurs, sitting under the summer-shade of his Cormeille cherry-tree with Lucretius and Lucilius and Antoninus, while his friends killed each other with fret and fume. Bonaparte said, 'I have conquered Cairo, Milan, and Paris in less than two years, and yet if I died to-morrow I should only get half a page in any biographical dictionary;' but to get a line, or even only to get an obituary notice and oblivion, men toil a life away and consume their years in thankless, grinding, ceaseless labour. The benighted opticisism of vanity! 'The succession of the nations is but as a torch-race.' What is it to feed the flame of one of the torches for a passing second,—a spark that flares and dies? The Greek ideal of Dionysus, with the ivy on his brow and the thyrsus in his hand, bringing joy wherever he moved, while the wine flowed and nature bloomed wherever the god's foot fell, is the ideal of the real happy life, the life that knows how to enjoy."

The thoughts drifted through his mind lightly, dreamily,

as the swell of the organ-notes poured on. It was true he enjoyed, and his temper, like the temper of the Greeks, asked only this of life.

Chandos was not only famous, not only gifted, not only steeped to the lips in delicate and sensuous delight; he was much more than all these: he was happy.

How many lives can say that?

The music paused suddenly, dropping down in its gorgeous festival of sound as a lark suddenly drops to the grass in the midst of its flood of song. Chandos turned as it ceased, and broke his idle thread of musing reverie, while he laid his hand gently on the musician's shoulder.

"Dear Lulli, while one hears your music, one is in Avillion. You make me dream of the old serene and sacred *Περίπατα γαίης*. Tell me, have you everything you wish? Is there nothing that can bring you more pleasure?"

Guido Lulli shook his head.

"I should be little worthy all I owe to you, if I could find one want unsatisfied."

"Owe! You owe me nothing. Who would give me such music as you can give? It is not everyone who is fortunate enough to have a Mozart in his house. I wish I could serve you better in the search that is nearest your heart. We have done all we could, Guido."

His voice was very gentle, and had a certain hesitation. He approached a subject that had a bitterness both of grief and of shame to his listener; and Chandos, carelessly disdainful of a prince's wishes, was careful of the slightest jar that could wound the sensitiveness of the man who was dependent on him.

Lulli's head sank, and a dark shadow passed over his face,—a flush of shame and of anger, as heavy and as passionate as could arise in a temperament so visionary



and tender to feminine softness, mingled, too, with a sorrow far deeper than wrath can reach.

"It is enough," he said, simply, his words hushed, low, and bitter in his throat. "We are certain of her shame."

"Not certain," said Chandos, compassionately, while his hand still lay lightly on the musician's shoulder. "Where there is doubt there is always hope; and judgment should never be passed till everything is known. Do not be harsh to her, even in thought."

"Harsh? Am I harsh?"

"Not in your heart ever, I know."

"Not to her, not to her,—no!" murmured the Provençal, while his face was still sunk on his hands; "but to *him*. Not even to know his name; not even to know where he harbours; not to tell where she is, that when she is deserted and wretched she might be saved from lower depths still!"

A terrible pain shook and stifled his voice, and Chandos was silent. The musician's sorrow was one to which no consolation could be offered and no hope suggested.

"I have had all done to trace her that is possible," he said, at last; "but two years have passed, and there seems no chance of ever succeeding; all clue appears lost. Do you think that she may have gone by another name at the time that her lover, whoever he may be, first saw her?"

"It is possible, monseigneur; I cannot tell," said Lulli, slowly, with a pathos of weariness more touching than all complaint and lament. "Be it as it will, she is dead to me; but—but—if we could know *him*, helpless cripple as I am, I would find strength enough to avenge my wrong and hers."

He raised himself as he said it, his slight, bent form quivering and instinct with sudden force, his pale and

hollow cheek flushed, his eyes kindling. It was like electric vitality flashing for one brief moment into a dead man's limbs.

Chandos looked at him with a profound pity. To him, a man of the world, a courtier, a lover of pleasure, the untutored, chivalrous simplicity of this idealist roused infinite compassion. He saw brought home to Guido Lulli, as a terrible and heart-burning anguish, those amours which in his own world and his own life were but the caprice and amusement of idle hours, the subject of a gay, indifferent jest. He had never before reflected how much these careless toys may chance to cost in their recoil to others.

He leaned his hand with a warmer pressure on the musician's shoulder.

"I wish I could aid you more, Guido; but there is nothing that I know of that has been left untried. Strive to forget both; neither is worth enough to give you pain. You believe at least that I have had every effort used for you, although it has been in vain?"

Lulli looked at him with a slight smile,—a smile that passed over the suffering and the momentary passion on his face like an irradiation of light. It was so full of sublime and entire faith.

"Believe *you*, monseigneur? Yes, as I believe in God."

It was the simple truth, and paid back to Chandos his own love for men, and faith in them, in his own coin.

"I thank you. I am *your* debtor, then, Lulli," he said, gently. "I must leave you now, or I shall have no sleep before the day is fairly up; but I will see you again some time during the morning. If you think of anything that has not been done, or might be done again, with any hope to find Valeria, tell me, and I will give directions for it. Adieu!"

He left the chamber, the flash of his diamonds and the imperial blue of his dress glancing bright in the beams of the young day. Lulli turned his head, and followed him with the wistful gaze that seemed to come from so far a distance,—followed him as the eyes of a dog follow the shadow of its master.

"So generous, so pitiful, so gentle, so noble! If I could only live to repay him!" he murmured, half aloud, as the door closed upon the kingly grace and splendid manhood of his saviour and his solitary friend. Vast as was the contrast, hopelessly wide as was the disparity between them, there was not one pang of jealousy in the loyal heart of the crippled musician.

Then, with the last echo of his patron's step, his head drooped again, and the listless, lifeless passiveness, the weary and suffering indifference, which always lay so heavily upon him, save at such times when his affections or his art struck new vitality through him, returned once more, while his fingers lay motionless upon the ivory keys. Although happy (as far as happiness could be in common with his shattered and stricken life), in the artistic seclusion in which he was allowed to dwell, and in the unbroken pursuit of his art which Chandos enabled him to enjoy, there was one sorrow on him weightier than any of his personal afflictions.

The only thing that had ever loved him was a child, several years younger than himself, his cousin, orphaned and penniless like himself, to keep whom in some poor shape of comfort, in their old home of Arles, Lulli had beggared his own poverty till—sending to her every coin that he possessed—he had been near his grave from sheer famine when Chandos had found him among the hills of the Vega. For some time he had never mentioned the name of Valeria to his patron, from the shrinking and

sensitive delicacy of his nature, which dreaded to press another supplicant and dependent on his patron's charity. All he could give he sent to Arles for Valeria Lulli, who was lodged with an old canoness of the city, and began to be noted, as she grew older, as the most perfect contralto in the girls' choir in all Southern France. See her he could not; a sense of duty to the man by whom he had been redeemed from death, and the infirmities of his own health, which that nigh approach of death had more utterly enfeebled, prevented him from returning to Provence. But he heard of her; he heard from her; he knew that she was drawing near womanhood in safe shelter, and a happy, if obscure, home, through him; and it sufficed for him. His affection for her was the tender solicitude of a brother, shut out from any tinge of a warmer emotion, both through his own sense of how utterly banned from him by his calamity was all thought of woman's love, and through his own memory of Valeria, which was but of a fair and loving child.

Two years before this morning in which Chandos listened to the *Tantum Ergo*, a heavy blow fell on the musician, smiting down all the fond, vague thoughts with which he had associated Valeria's dawning womanhood with the dawning success of his own ambition in his art. A long silence had passed by, bringing no tidings of her, when his anxiety grew uncontrollable and knew itself powerless; he had passionately repented of the silence he had preserved on her name to his only friend. He inquired tidings of the canoness, but received none. Chandos was away, yachting in the Mediterranean, and spending the late summer and the autumn in the East; the winter also he spent in Paris. When, with the spring, Lulli saw him once more, he told him at length of Valeria, and entreated his aid to learn the cause of the silence that

had fallen between him and Arles. Chandos gave it willingly; he sent his own courier abroad to inquire for the young choral singer. All answer with which he returned was that the canoness had died in the course of that summer, that Valeria Lulli had disappeared from the city, and that neither priest nor layman could tell more, save that it was the general supposition that she had fled with a handsome milord, who had visited the cathedral, heard her singing, learned her residence, and visited her often during the summer months. He too had left Arles without any one remembering his name or knowing where he had gone. The gossips of the still solemn old Roman city had noted him often with Valeria at vesper-time, and underneath the vine-hung, grey stone coping of her casement in the canoness's little *tourelle*.

So the history ran,—brief, but telling a world. To Guido Lulli there was room neither for doubt nor hope; it was plain as the daylight to him, and needed not another line added to it. It cut him to the heart. Shame for the honour of his name, which, though sunk into poverty, claimed descent from him whose divine strains once floated down the rose-aisles of Versailles; passionate bitterness against the unknown stranger who had robbed him; grief for the loss and dishonour of the one whom he had cherished from her childhood,—all these were terrible to him; but they were scarcely so cruel as the sting of ingratitude from a life that he alone had supported, and for which he had endured, through many years, deprivations uncounted and solicitude unwearying. He said but little, but the iron went down deep into his gentle suffering nature, and left a wound there that was never closed.

No more had been learned of the fate of Valeria; it sank into silence, and all the efforts exerted by his patron's

wealth and by the ingenuity of his hirelings failed to bring one light on the surface of the darkness that covered her lost life. As Lulli has said, she was dead to him. But the pain she had dealt was living, and would live long. Natures like Lulli's suffer silently, but suffer greatly; and now, when the monastical silence closed in again around him as the sound of Chandos' steps died off the morning stillness, and the early rays only strayed on the ivory whiteness of the carved Passion above the little shrine of his antique chamber, he sat there, listless and lost in thought, his head sunk, his hands resting immovable upon the keys with which he could give out fit music for the gods, the sadness on him which ever oppressed him when he came back from his own best-beloved world of melodious sound into the coarse, harsh, weary world of fact and of existence.

He thought of the bright child whose desolate life he had succoured, as he had used to see her, with the sunlight on her hair, while she gathered bowing crowns of summer lilies, and feathery wealth of seeding grasses, among the giant ruins of the Roman Amphitheatre, where the Gaul and the Frank, the Latin and the Greek, lay mouldering in the community of death, while the arrowy Rhône flashed its azure in the light, and the purple grapes grew mellow in the golden languor of a Southern noon.

## CHAPTER VI.

*Latet Anguis in Herba.*

"LOTS of news!" said Trevenna, crushing up a pile of journals as he sat at breakfast in Park Lane—his second breakfast, of course, for which he commonly dropped in as Chandos was taking his first. "Queer thing, a paper is; sort of prosaic phoenix, eh? Kings die, ministers die, editors go to pot, its staff drops under the

sod, governments smash, nations swamp, actors change; but on goes the paper, coming out imperturbably every morning. Nothing disturbs it; deaths enrich it; wars enlarge it; if a royal head goes into the grave, it politely prints itself with a black border by way of gratifying his soul, and sells itself to extreme advantage with a neat dovetailing of 'Le roi est mort,' and 'Vive le roi.' Queer thing, a paper!"

"A melancholy thing in that light. To think of the swarm of striving life pressed into a single copy of the *Times* is as mournful as Xerxes' crowds under Mount Ida, though certainly not so poetic."

"Mournful? Don't see it," responded Trevenna, who never did see anything mournful in life, except the miserable mistake by which he had not been born a millionaire. "It's rather amusing to see all the pother and bother, and know that they'll all be dead, every man of 'em, fifty years hence; because one always has an unuttered conviction that some miracle will happen by which one won't die oneself. How thoroughly right Lucretius is! it *is* so pleasant to see other men in a storm while one's high and dry beyond reach of a drop; and to watch them all rushing and scuttling through life in the *Times*' columns is uncommonly like watching them rush through a tempest. You know they'll all of them get splashed to the skin, and not one in ten thousand reach their goal."

Chandos laughed.

"But when you are in the tempest, my friend, I fancy you would be very glad of a little more sympathy than you give, and would be very grateful for an umbrella?"

"Oh, the devil take sympathy! Give me success."

"The selection is not new. But in defeat——"

"In defeat? let it go ten leagues farther to the deuce! Sympathy in success might be genuine; people

would scramble for the *bonbons* I dropped, but sympathy in defeat was never anything better yet than a sneer delicately veiled."

"Poor humanity! You will allow nothing good to come out of Nazareth; a sweeping verdict, when by Nazareth you mean mankind. Well, I would rather give twenty rogues credit for being honest men, than wrong one honest man by thinking him a rogue. To think evil unjustly is to create evil; to think too well of a man may end in making him what you have called him."

Trevenna smiled—his arch, humorous smile, that danced in the mirth of his eyes, and twinkled so joyously and mischievously about the corners of his mouth.

"If it be your preference to think too well of men, *très-cher*, you can hardly miss gratifying it. Rogues grow thick as blackberries. Only when *Turcaret*, whom you think the mirror of honour, makes you bankrupt, and *Gingillino*, whom you believe the soul of probity, makes off with your plate, and *Tartuffe*, whom you have deemed a saint of the first water, forges a little bill on your name, blame nobody but your own delightful and expensive optimism; that's all! Don't you know you think too well of *me*?"

There was a shade of earnestness and, for the instant, of regret in his bold bright eyes, as they fastened themselves on Chandos'; there was, for the moment, one faint impulse of compunction and of conscience in his heart. He knew that the man before him trusted him so utterly, so loyally; he knew that the witness of the world to sink and shame him would only have made the hand of Ernest Chandos close firmer on his own. That hand was stretched out now in a gesture of generous frank grace, of true and gallant friendship.



"You know I have no fear of that. Our friendship is of too old a date."

Trevenna hesitated a moment, one slight, impalpable second of time, not to be counted, not to be noted; then his hand closed on that held out to him.

The momentary better thought had gone from him. When he took the hand of Chandos thus, few criminals had ever fallen lower than he. Were Catholic fancies true, and "guardian angels with us as we walk," his guardian spirit would have left Trevenna then for ever.

"Well," he said, with his mirthful and ringing laugh, like his voice, clear and resonant as a clarion, "you found me in no irreproachable place, *mon prince*, at any rate; so you can't complain if I turn out a scamp. A debtor's prison wasn't precisely the place for the lord of Clarencieux to choose an ally."

"Many a 'lord of Clarencieux' has gamed away his wit and his wealth—which was your only sin then, my dear fellow. I am not afraid of the consequences. So many people who speak well of themselves are worth nothing, that by inverse ratio, Trevenna, you, who speak so ill of yourself, must be worth a great deal. You look at some things from too low a standing-point, to my fancy, to be sure; but you see as high as your stature will let you, I suppose."

"Of course, literally and metaphorically, you're a very tall man, and I'm a very short; and, literally and metaphorically, if you see stars I don't, I see puddles you don't; if you watch for planets I forget, I watch for quicksands you forget. My stature will be the more useful of the two in the end. Apropos of quicksands, the first architect of them in the country was magnificent on the Cat Tax last night."

"Who? Milverton?"

"Yes, Milverton. As if you'd forgotten who was Exchequer! If he were a handsome *coryphée*, now, you'd be eager to hear every syllable about the *début*. The speech was superb. To hear him! he drew the line so admirably between the necessary and humble mouser, helpmate of the housewife, and the pampered, idle Angora, fed on panada, and kept from caprice; he touched so inimitably on the cat in Egypt and Cyprus, tracing the steps by which a deity had become a drudge, and the once-sacred life been set to preserve the pantries from mice; he threw so choice a sop to the Exeter Hall party by alluding to its fall as a meet judgment on a heathen deity, and richly merited by a creature that was mentioned in Herodotus, and not in the Bible; he sprinkled the whole so classically with Greek quotations that greatly imposed the House, and greatly posed it, its members having derived hazy Attic notions from the Greek cribs at the Universities, and Grote on rainy afternoons in the country. By Jove, the whole thing was masterly! The Budget will pass both Chambers."

Chandos laughed as he ate the mellowest of peaches.

"And that you call public life? a slavery to send straws down the wind, and twist cables of sand! The other evening I drove Milverton to Claire Rahel's. Just at her door a hansom tore after us, his Whip dashed up; the House was about to divide; Milverton must go down directly. And he went. There is an existence to spend! Fancy the empty platitudes of the benches, instead of the bright *mots* at Rahel's; the empty froth of placemen patriots, instead of the tasteful foam of sparkling Moselle!"

"Fie, fie, Chandos! You shouldn't satirise St. Stephen's, out of filial respect."

"The St. Stephen's of my father's days was a very different affair. They are not politicians now, they are

only placemen; they don't dictate to the press, the press dictates to them; they don't care how the country is lowered, they only care to keep in office. When there is an European simoom blowing through the House, I may come and look on: so long as they brew storms in the saucer, I have no inclination for the tea-party. Would *you* like public life, Trevenna?"

"If? What's the good of my liking anything? I'm a Pariah of the *pavé*, a Chicot to the clubs; I can only float myself in dinner-stories and gossip."

"Gossip! You inherit the souls of Pepys and Grimm. That such a clever fellow as you can——"

"Precisely because I am a clever fellow do I collect what everybody loves, except *raffineurs* like yourself. I am never so welcome as when I take about a charmingly chosen bundle of characters to be crushed and reputations to be cracked. To slander his neighbour is indirectly to flatter your listener; of course, slander is welcome. Every one likes to hear something bad of somebody else; it enhances his comfort when he *is* comfortable, and makes him think 'somebody's worse off than I am,' when he isn't."

"I wonder if there were ever such a combination of Theophrastus' bitterness and Plautus' good humour in any living being before you, Trevenna? You judge humanity like Rochefoucauld, and laugh with it like Falstaff; and you tell men that they are all rascals as merrily as if you said they were all angels."

"A great deal more merrily, I suspect. One can get a good deal of merriment out of rogues; there is no better company under the sun; but angels would be uncommonly heavy work. Sin's the best salt."

"Mr. Paul Leslie is waiting, sir," said the groom of the chambers, approaching his master.

"Quite right; I will see him in the library."

"Paul Leslie? That's a new name; I don't know it," said Trevenna, who made a point of knowing every one who came to his host, no matter how insignificant.

"Very likely. He never gives dinners, and could not lend you a sou."

There was a certain careless, disdainful irony in the words, half unconscious to Chandos himself. He had all the manner of the *vieille cour*, all its stately grace, and all its delicate disdain; and cordial as his regard was for Trevenna, and sincere as was his belief that the bluntness and professed egotism of the man covered a thousand good qualities and proclaimed a candour bright and open as the day, he was not, he could not be, blind to the fact that Trevenna never sought or heeded any living soul except those who could benefit him.

"I understand," laughed Trevenna; with a riding-whip about his shoulders he would still have laughed good-naturedly. "One of your *protégés*, of course; some Giotto who was drawing sheep when the Clarendieux Cimabue saw him; some starving Chatterton who has plucked up heart of grace to write and ask the author of 'Lucrèce' to give him the *magna nominis umbra*. Tell him to turn navy or corn-chandler, Chandos, before he worships the Muses without having five thousand a year to support those dissipated ladies upon; and twenty years hence he'll thank you while he eats his fat bacon with a relish in the pot-house, or weighs out his pottles of barley in sensible contentment."

"You are a thorough Englishman, Trevenna; you would make a poet an exciseman, and expect him to be serenely grateful for the patronage! Pray, how many of those who honour 'the Muses,' as you call them, have had five thousand a year, or had even their daily bread when

they started, for that matter? I must give this boy his audience, so I may not see you till we meet in the park or the clubs. You dine with me to-night? There are a triad of Serene Highnesses coming, and German royalty is terribly oppressive society."

"Oh, I will be here, monseigneur; I obey orders. You want me at your dinners as Valois wanted Triboulet, eh? The jester is welcomed for the nonsense he talks, and may be more familiar than guests of higher degree."

"Triboulet? What are you thinking of? Men of your talent bring their own welcome, and are far more creditor than debtor to society. Surely Trevenna, you never misdoubt the sincerity of my friendship?"

The other looked up with his bright *bonhomie*.

"You are a Sir Caladore of courtesy. No; I am as sure of the quality of your friendship as I am of the quality of your clarets. I can't say more; and, as the world bows down before you, the distinction of it is very gratifying. Besides, you have the best *chef* in town; and I dearly love a friend that gives good dinners."

Chandos laughed. Trevenna always amused him; the utter absence of flattery refreshed him, and he knew the world too well not to know that sincerity and warmth of feeling were full as likely to lie under the frankly confessed egotism as under the suaver protestations of other men. Yet the answer chilled him ever so slightly, jarred on him ever so faintly. A temperament that is *never* earnest is at times well-nigh as wearisome as a temperament that is never gay; there comes a time when, if you can never touch to any depth, the ceaseless froth and brightness of the surface will create a certain sense of impatience, a certain sense of want. He felt this for the moment with Trevenna.

"No wonder the women are so fond of the caresses

of those *mains blanches*, they are as white, and as soft, and as delicate as a girl's—curse him!" thought Trevenna, while his eyes glanced from Chandos' hand, as it fell from his shoulder, and on to his own, which was broad, strong, and coarse, both in shape and in fibre, though tenacious in hold, and characteristic in form. The hand of Chandos was the hand of aristocrat and of the artist moulded in one; Trevenna's that of the working-man, of the gile gymnast, of the hardy mountain climber.

The thought was petty and passionate as any woman's—the envy puerile and angered to a feminine and childish littleness. But this was Trevenna's one weakness, this jealousy of all these differences of caste and of breeding, as his sonnets were Richelieu's, as his paintings were Goethe's, as his deformed limb was Byron's.

The warm friendship offered him and proved to him was forgotten in the smart of a small, wounded vanity. A straw misplaced will make us enemies: a millstone of benefits hung about his neck may fail to anchor down by us a single friend. We may lavish what we will—kindly thought, loyal service, untiring aid, and generous deed—and they are all but as oil to the burning; as fuel to the flame, when spent upon those who are jealous of us.

Despite, however, his hearty curse upon his host, Trevenna went on with his breakfast complacently, while Chandos left him to give audience (and something more) to the young artist, a clever boy without a sou; with the talent of a Scheffer and the poverty of a Chatterton, whom he was about to enable to study in peace in Rome. Trevenna was a sagacious man, a practical man, and did not allow his own personal enmities or the slight circumstance of his having mentally damned the man whose hospitality he enjoyed to interfere with his appreciation of his lobster cutlets, liqueurs, *pâtés*, and amontillado.

Then, when he had fairly finished a breakfast that would have done honour to the inventions of a Ude, he went out to the clubs,—it was two o'clock in the day,—to keep up his reputation as a public talker, with a variety of charming, damaging stories, and inimitable specimens of inventive ingenuity, such as made him welcome at all the best tables, and well received even in the smoking sanctum of the Guards' Club. Trevenna had not dined at his own expense for ten years; he knew so well how to amuse society. His manufactures were matchless; they were the most adroit and lasting slanders of all,—slanders that had a foundation of truth.

"What's up, Charlie? You look rather blue," said that easiest and most familiar of "diners-out," whom no presence could awe and no coolness could ice, as he sauntered now down Pall Mall with a young dandy of the Foreign Office, who had played so much chicken-hazard, and planned so many Crown and Sceptre and Star and Garter *fêles* in the mornings which he devoted to the State, that he had come to considerable grief over "floating paper."

Charlie nodded silently, pulling his amber moustaches.

"*Tight*, eh? Dal won't bleed?" asked Trevenna, with a good-natured almost affectionate interest. "Dal" was Lord Dallerstone, Charlie's elder brother.

"Bleed? No. He's up a tree himself," murmured the victim. "It's those confounded Tindall & Co. people; they've got bills of mine,—bought them in,—and they put the screw on no end."

"Tindall & Co.! Ah! Hard people, ain't they?"

"Devils!" murmured Charlie, still in the sleepest of tones. "It's that vile old Jew Mathias, you know; *he's* the firm, no doubt of it, though he keeps it so dark.

'Pay or——' That's all they say; and I've no more idea where to get any money than that pug."

"Bought your paper up? that is awkward work," said Trevenna, musingly. "I hardly see what you can do. I know the Tindall people are very sharp—old Hebrew beggar is, as you say, at least. How much breathing-time do they give you?"

"Only till Thursday."

"Humph! only forty-eight hours; close shave!" said Trevenna. "Of course you can't do anything if you're not able to get the money. They've the law on their side."

"*Can't* you think of anything? You're such a clever fellow, Trevenna!" asked the embryo diplomatist, whose personal diplomacy was at its wits' end.

"Thanks for the compliment, *bon garçon*, but I'm not clever enough to make money out of nothing. How people would rush to my laboratory, if I were! I should cut out all the pet preachers with the women. I really haven't an idea what advice to give you. I'd see these Tindall rascals with pleasure for you; but I don't suppose that would do any good."

"Try! there's a good fellow!" said the boy, with more eagerness than he had ever thrown into his sleepy, silky voice in all the days of his dandyism.

"I'll ask them to let you have longer time, at any rate. Perhaps they'll be persuaded to renew the bills. Anyway, I'm more up to City tricks than you are. Let's see, what's their place of business? I remember—that wretched, dirty place in Piffler's Court, isn't it? I'll go down there to-morrow morning."

Charlie's languid eyes brightened with delighted hope, and he thanked his friend over and over again with all that cordial but embarrassed eagerness which characterises



Young England when it is warmly touched and does not like to make a fool of itself. Charlie's heart was a very kind, a very honest one, under the shell of dandy apathy, and it held Trevenna from that moment in the closest gratitude.

"Such a brick of a fellow, to go bothering himself into that beastly City after my affairs!" he thought, as he turned into Pratt's for a game at billiards, while Trevenna sauntered on down the shady side of the street.

"It's as well to oblige him, we should get nothing by putting the screw on him; he is only worth the tobaccopots and art-trash he's heaped together in his rooms, and that chestnut hack that he's never paid for. It's as well to oblige him. Dal will kill himself sooner or later at the rate he goes, and the next brother's an invalid; Charlie's sure to have the title, I fancy, some day or other," thought Trevenna, as he went along, encountering acquaintances at every yard, and receiving a dozen invitations to luncheon in as many feet of the *trottoir*. This was Trevenna's special statesmanship,—to cast his nets so far forward that they took in not only the present but the future. He sought the society and the friendship of young men: who knew what use they might not be some day?

Men thought him "a pushing fellow, but then so deucedly amusing," and liked him. He was almost everywhere welcome to them; for he was not only a popular wit and a gossipier, but he was a surpassing whist- and a capital billiard-player, an excellent shot, a splendid salmon-fisher, and as unerring a judge of all matters "horsy" as ever pronounced on a set of Rawcliffe yearlings and picked out the winner from the cracks at Danebury. They thought him "nobody," and looked on him as only Chandos' *homme d'affaires*, but they liked him. Women alone never favoured him, and held him invariably at an icy distance,

partly, of course, from the fact that women never smile upon a man who has nothing. Ladies are your only thorough Optimatès. You like a man if he be a good shot, a good rider, a good talker—they must first know “all about him;” you laugh if the wit be *ben trovato*—they must learn, before they smile, if the speaker be worth applauding; you will listen if the brain be well filled—they must know that the purse is so also. Women, therefore, gave no sort of attention to Trevenna, but only spoke of him as “a little man,—odious little man, so brusque; he keeps a cab, and lives no one knows how; hangs on to great men, and rich men, like Chandos.”

Besides, Trevenna offended ladies in other ways. If not a great disciple of truth *in propria personâ*, he scattered a good many truths about in the world, though he lied with an enchanting readiness and tact when occasion needed. He nevertheless satirised hypocrisy and humbug with a genuine relish in the work; his natural candour relieved itself in the flagellations he gave humanity. He had a rich Hudibrastic vein in him, and he was not the less sincere in his ironies on the world’s many masks because his sagacity led him to borrow them to serve his own ends.

Truth is a rough, honest, helter-skelter terrier, that none like to see brought into their drawing-rooms, throwing over all their dainty little ornaments, upsetting their choicest Dresden, that nobody guessed was cracked till it fell with the mended side uppermost, and keeping every one in incessant tremor lest the next snap should be at their braids or their boots, of which neither the varnish nor the luxuriance will stand rough usage. Trevenna took this unmuzzled brute about with him into precincts where there were delicacies a touch would soil, frailties a brush would crack, and smooth carpets of brilliant bloom

and velvet gloss that, scratched up, showed the bare boards underneath, and let in the stench of rats rotting below. Of course, he and the terrier too were detested by ladies. Such a *gaucherie* would have been almost unbearable in a duke! They would have had difficulty to control the grimace into a smile had the coarse and cruel pastime been a prince's: for a penniless man-about-town it was scarcely likely they would open their boudoir-doors to such a master and to such an animal. Women abominated him, and Trevenna was too shrewd to under-rate the danger of his enemies. He knew that women make nine-tenths of all the mischief of this world, and that their delicate hands demolish the character and the success of any one whom they dislike; but to have given himself to conciliate them would have been a task of such infinite weariness to him that he let things go as they would, and set himself to achieve what he purposed without reference to them. He was quite sure that if success shone on him the fair sex would smile too, and would soon find out that he was the most "delightful original in the world!"

"Chandos," said Trevenna, an hour or two later, "I want to tell you something. That young brother of Dallerstone's has come to grief,—fallen in Jews' hands,—got up a tree altogether. Dal can't help him; he's as bad himself; and they'll be down upon Charlie on Thursday."

"Poor boy! Cannot we stop that?"

"Well, you could, of course; but it is asking a great deal of you. I have promised him to see Tindall's people."

"Who are they?"

"Jew firm in the City; hold a good many of your aristocratic friends in their teeth, too. But I was going to say I can't do anything for him unless I take them some security that they will have their money. Now, if

I could use your name, though there is no reason in life why you should give it——”

“My name? Oh, I will serve him, certainly, if he be in difficulties.”

“Merely your name to get the bills renewed. They’ll trust that.”

“But I suppose his debts are not very great?—he is such a lad. Would it not be better to buy his paper out of these Hebrews’ hands?”

“Mercy on us, monseigneur!” cried Trevenna. “If you don’t talk as coolly of buying up any unknown quantity of bills as of buying a cigar-case! No: there is no necessity for doing anything of the kind. If you will just give your name to renew the acceptances, it will serve him admirably. Mind, this is entirely my idea; he doesn’t dream of it; but I know you are always so willing to aid any one.”

“I shall be most happy to do him any good,—poor young fellow! You can have my signature when you like, though I think I might as well buy the bills at once; for most likely it will end in my paying the money,” laughed Chandos. Trevenna’s eyes smiled with self-contented amusement as he stood a moment watching the roll of the carriages down St. James’s Street.

“That was a very good thought,” he mused to himself. “I shall oblige Charlie,—what an angel he will think me!—and we shall get another of the Prince of Clarencieux’s signatures into Tindall & Co.’s hands. Ah! there is nothing like combination and management.”

“How does that man live, Ernest?” asked Cos Grenvil, as Trevenna drove from the doors of White’s in his very dashing little tilbury.

“Live, my dear fellow? I don’t know. What do you mean?”

"How does he get the money to keep that trap? The mare's worth five hundred guineas. He always vows he hasn't a sou."

"A man must drive something," said Chandos, who knew that the mare had come out of his own stables. "Trevenna always dines out, you know; and rooms in a quiet street cost nothing."

"Where was it you first met him?"

"I? At Baden, years and years ago."

"Ah!" yawned Grenvil; "plenty of scoundrels to be picked up there."

Chandos laughed.

"Thanks for the information, Cos. You are prejudiced against Trevenna. Don't believe all the nonsense he talks against himself: there is not a better fellow living. Ah, there is the Lennox! How splendidly that woman wears! she must be thirty, but she is lovely as she was ten years ago. I always liked Mrs. Lennox; she is really perfect style, and, besides——"

Chandos did not conclude his sentence as to his regard for the subject of it, but looked after her a moment. A lovely woman, as he had said, with hazel eyes and hair, and a half-disdainful, half-melancholy glance from under her drooping lids, who was driving a team of cream Circassian ponies. "*L'Empire, c'est moi*," was written in every line of her classic features, Queen of the Free Lances as she was, daring and unscrupulous Bohemian as the world notoriously declared her.

"This note came for you, sir, during the morning," said Alexis, his head valet, as Chandos went into his chamber to dress for dinner at the French Embassy.

"Who brought it?"

"I really don't know who, sir; a *commissionnaire*. He could not tell who the servant was that gave it him, but

said he was to beg me to see it personally shown you," said Alexis, to whom the *commissionnaire* had brought a considerable *douceur* to induce him to perform this office, all the letters that were sent to Chandos in, unknown hands passing to his secretary.

He took it as he went into his dressing-room, and glanced at it indifferently. Like all well-known men, he received so many communications from strangers that he never looked at any letters save those he especially cared to open. We are all more or less martyrs to letters, and get a salutary dread of them as years roll onward. But this little note was so delicate, so perfumy, so pretty, and looked so like a love-missive, that Chandos for once broke both his rule and its seal. Little of love repaid him: the note was of most unfeminine brevity, though of thoroughly feminine mystery.

"CHANDOS,—

"Believe in evil for once in your life if you can. The man you took out of a debtors' prison hates you, if ever there were hate in this world. Under his bright good humour there lies a purpose very fatal to you. What purpose? I cannot tell you. Watch, and you may unmask it. All I entreat of you is, be on your guard; and do not let your own heedless generosity, your own loyal and gallant faith, betray you into the hands of a traitor. Give no trust, give no friendship, to Trevenna: 'latet anguis in herbâ.'

"Your most sincere Well-wisher."

Chandos read the note, then crushed it up and flung it from him.

A certain chilliness had passed over him at the words that attacked in the dark the man whom he had so long

trusted and befriended. Belief in it, even for a second, had not power to touch him. An anonymous note of course brought its own condemnation with it; but suspicion in any shape was so utterly alien and abhorrent to him that its mere suggestion repelled him. Suspicion, to frank and generous tempers, is a cowardice, a treachery, a vile and creeping thing that dares not brave the daylight. The attack, the innuendo, the unauthenticated charge, only rallied him nearer him whom they impugned, not from obstinacy or from waywardness,—his nature was too gentle to have a touch of either,—but simply from the chivalry in his temperament that drew him to those who were slandered, and the loyalty in his friendship that clung closer to his friend when in need.

“Poor Trevenna! Some lady’s vengeance, I suppose. If she were not too clever for any such folly, and too generous for any such slander, I should say the writing was Beatrix Lennox’s: it is very like, though disguised,” he thought, as he glanced at the note where it lay among the azure silk and laces of his bed, where it had fallen.

It left a transient pain, impatience, and depression on him for ten minutes after its reception. To have read the mere suggestion of perfidy in the man he trusted made Chandos feel himself a traitor; and to his careless, insouciant, serenity-loving temper, any jar of a harsher world, any breath of doubt or of treachery, was as repellent to his mind as the east wind was to his senses.

## CHAPTER VII.

A Jester who hated both Prince and Palace.

“LADY CHESTERTON is vowing Cherubini is divine. What queer divinity! What would Michael Angelo have said to an archangel in a tail-coat, a lace cravat, and a pair of white kid gloves, holding a roll of music, and

looking a cross between a brigand, a waiter, and a parson?" said Trevenna to the Countess de la Vivarol. Madame de la Vivarol was the only woman who in any way countenanced and liked Trevenna, the only one of the exclusive leaders of *ton* who ever deigned to notice his existence; and she was amused by his impudence, his *sang-froid*, and his oddity, and paid him only just as much attention as Montespan and other great ladies of Versailles paid their Barbary monkey or their little negro dwarf, according the pet liberties because of its strangeness and its insignificance.

"Droll life, a public singer's," went on Trevenna, who could not keep his tongue quiet even through a morning concert, and who, moreover, hated music heartily, and could not have told "*Mose in Egitto*" from "Yankee Doodle." "Subsists on his clavicle, and keeps his bank-balance in his thorax; knows his funds will go down if he hatches up a sore throat, and loses all his capital if he catches a cough; lunches off cutlets and claret to come and sing 'The moon rides high,' in broad daylight; and cries '*Io son ricco e tu sei bella*,' while he's wondering how he shall pay his debts, and thinking what an ugly woman the singer with him in the *duo* is. Ah, by-the-by, madame,—apropos of plain women,—the Marchesa di Santiago has given some superb malachite candelabra as a votive offering to Moorfields, for the same reason, they *do* say, as the Princess de Soubise gave gold lamps to Bossuet, '*pour le pouvoir de pêcher à l'âme tranquille*.'"

"*Chut!* I detest scandal," smiled Madame de la Vivarol, "and license has its limits, M. Trevenna. Madame di Santiago is my most particular friend."

"Exactly; of your enemy, madame, I know a detrimental story would not be half so piquant! To hear ill of our foes is the salt of life, but to hear ill of our



friends is the *sauce blanche* itself," responded Trevenna the Imperturbable.

The countess laughed, and gave him a dainty blow with her satin programme.

"Most impudent of men! When will you learn the first lesson of society, and decently and discreetly *apprendre à vous effacer?*"

"*A m'effacer?*" The advice Lady Harriet Vandeleur gave Cecil. Very good for mediocre people, I dare say; but it wouldn't suit *me*. There are some people, you know, that won't iron down for the hardest rollers. *M'effacer?* No! I'd rather any day be an ill-bred originality than a well-bred nonentity."

"Then you succeed perfectly in being what you wish! Don't you know, monsieur, that to set yourself against conventionalities is like talking too loud?—an impertinence and an under-breeding that society resents by exclusion?"

"Yes, I know it. But a duke may bawl, and nobody shuts out *him*; a prince might hop on one leg, and everybody would begin to hop too. Now, what the ducal lungs and the princely legs might do with impunity, I declare I've a right to do, if I like."

"*Bécasse!* no one can declare his rights till he can do much more, and—purchase them. Have a million, and we may perhaps give you a little license to be unlike other persons; without the million it is an ill-bred *gaucherie*."

"Ah, I know! Only a nobleman may be original; a poor penniless wretch upon town must be humbly and insignificantly commonplace. What a pity for the success of the aristocratic monopolists that nature puts clever fellows and fools just in the reverse order! But then nature's a shocking socialist."

"And so are you."

Trevenna laughed.

"Hush, madame. Pray don't destroy me with such a whisper."

"And be silent yourself," said Madame la Comtesse. "You are the most incorrigible chatterer out of a monkey-house; and one cannot silence *you* with a few nuts to crack, for the only thing you relish is mischief. *Chut!* I want to hear the *concerto*."

"*Apprendre à m'effacer*," meditated Trevenna. "Life has wanted to teach me that lesson ever since I opened my eyes to it. 'Fall in with the ruck; never think of winning the race; never dare to start for the gold cups or enter yourself for the aristocratic stakes: plod on between the cart-shafts; toil over the beaten tracks; let them beat you, and gall you, and tear your mouth with the curb, and never turn against them; but, though you hate your existence with all your might and main, bless the Lord for your creation, preservation, and salvation.' That was the lesson they tried to teach me. I said I'd be shot if I'd learn it; all the teachers and lawgivers couldn't force it down *my* throat. I am a rank outsider; nobody knows my stable or my trainer, my sire or my dam; nobody would bet a tenner on my chances. *N'importe!* a rank outsider has carried the Derby away from the favourite before now."

With which consolatory metaphor of the turf, Trevenna leaned back to Lady Chesterton with as familiar a *sans façon* as though he were the Duke of Crowndiamonds.

"Pretty landscape, that Hobbema? Nothing but a hovel among birch-trees. Why on earth is a tumble-down cottage so much prettier on canvas than a marble mansion? One likes crooked lines better than straight

ones, I suppose, in art and out of it. Humanity has a natural weakness for the zigzag."

Lady Chesterton made him a distant bow, and a stare of such unutterable insolence as only a great lady can command.

"That insufferable person! Such an odious *ton de garnison*! I cannot think how Chandos can countenance him," said her ladyship, without deigning to murmur any lower than usual, to the Marchioness of Sangroyal beside her.

The concert at which Trevenna was solacing himself for the martyrdom of melody by watching with his bright eyes for waifs and strays, for hints and grounds of future scandalous and entertaining historiettes, was one of the musical mornings for which the house in Park Lane was famous; concerts of the choicest, under the organisation of Guido Lulli, most delicate, most masterly of musical geniuses, with the *répertoire* as full of artistic light and shade as any Titian, and the performance, by the first singers of Europe, just sufficiently, and only sufficiently, long to charm without ever detaining the ear. These concerts were invariably in the picture-galleries, so that while the glories of Gluck and Handel and Rossini and Meyerbeer floated on the air, the companion-art was always before the eyes of the audience, while beyond, aisle upon aisle of colour and blossom opened from the conservatories. The softest of south winds blew gently in now from the paradise of flowers glowing there; the sunlight fell into some deep-hued Giorgione, some historical gathering of Veronese, or some fair martyr-head of Delaroche; the *dilettanti* murmured praise of a fugue in D or a violin *obligato*; the gold-corniced, purple-hung shadowy gallery was filled with a maze of bright hues and perfumy laces and the fair faces of women; and Chandos,

lying back in his *fauteuil* near an open window, listened dreamily to the harmonies of Beethoven, and let his eyes dwell on the Queen of Lilies.

In the high-pressure whirl and incessant amusement of his life, it was difficult for any one impression to be made so indelibly upon him that it could not be chased away and surpassed by fifty others as fascinating; but, as far as he could be haunted by one exclusive thought, that thought, since the night of his ball, had been the young Lily Queen.

"In many mortal forms I rashly sought  
The shadow of that idol of my thought!"

he mused to himself, with a smile. "Have I found it at last, I wonder? Surely."

He did not think that to seek it here might be to the full as rash, and to the full as vain, as any other phantom-search that had before beguiled him. Who ever does think so in the first sweetness of the aerial vision?

The moment when he had seen her as *Lucrèce* had been fatal to him; he had from that moment lost the power of judging or of reading her with truth and calmness; for from that moment she had become the mortal form of his ideal among women. The shell was so perfect, he never doubted that the pearl within was as fair.

His glance met hers now as he sat beside her just within the shade of one of the purple curtains, where she was framed in a setting of South American flowers, with one faint tint of the sunlight straying, rose-hued and mellow, across them and her.

The softness of a beautiful warmth passed over her face as she met his glance, wavering, delicate, the flush of unconscious love and half-startled pleasure; he did not ask if it were but from the rays of the sun, or if it were from the rays of a sun brighter and more precious

to us than the sun of the heavens,—that God of Light we call Gratified Vanity.

He bent to her with an almost caressing homage, though he only spoke commonplace words.

"I had the whole selection classical music to-day, Lady Valencia. I remembered you had said Mendelssohn was your favourite master."

She smiled,—a sweet glad smile, full of pleased surprise.

"You remembered my idle words?"

"No words can be idle to me that you have spoken."

No one heard the answer as the serene, sublime harmonies of the great Israelite floated through the air, and Chandos leaned forward towards her chair, thinking how like to one another were the pure music that thrilled his ear and the proud yet soft loveliness that charmed his heart. It was his way to say gentle things to all women, and to mean them indeed while he uttered them; but here he meant them more deeply than in the mere galantries of a courtly society.

She looked at him under the shadow of her long eyelashes.

"You will make me bold enough," she said, with a smile, "to venture to ask you a favour that I have been hopelessly meditating for the last half-hour."

"It is granted unasked. And now——?"

"And now—how strange you will think it!"

"Have no fear of that. If I can please you in anything, I shall be honoured enough. Your wish is——?"

"Well," she answered, with a low laugh that scarcely disturbed, or was told from, the music, "I want you to show me the room where *Lucrèce* was written. You do not let the world in there, they tell me; but I fancy you will not refuse me my entreaty to enter the sacred precincts."

"Who could refuse you anything?" he asked her in turn. "Where I wrote *Lucrèce* was chiefly in the East; but I will gladly let you honour my *sanctum*, though the thoughts that have been sufficient for me there will scarcely be so any longer when once you have left the memory of your presence to haunt it."

They spoke no more, as the richest melody of the selection rolled in all its grandeur down the air, bearing with it all the life and soul of the Provençal musician. To those who were gathered here—save to Chandos, indeed, who never heard a perfect rhythm of harmony, but that he glided on its chords through dreamy Shelley fancies—the music was but a pastime of the hour, a fashionable distraction to amuse a languid moment, a cover to flirtation; but to Lulli it was the very breath of existence. Shrinking from every strange glance and voice, and shunning all publicity as he did at all other times, he was now—now that he was absorbed in his art—as sublimely unconscious of the gaze or presence of that aristocratic and indifferent crowd as though they were peasant-children listening to his notes. He was as insensible to them as though they had no existence. What were they to him,—those cold *dilettanti*, those airy coquettes, those critical dandies, those beautiful idiots, who talked art-jargon without a throb of art within their souls? They had no part nor share with him. He lived in the world he created, he lived in the heaven of melody that was around him, and any other world was forgotten. And in that oblivion the man grew grand, the timid, suffering, helpless cripple became a king in his own right, a sovereign in his own domain,—an empire that lay far away from the fret and fume of men, far away from the unworthiness of life. His head was proudly borne; his haggard cheek was bright with the youth that, save in

dreams, he had never known; his eyes were alit with the light of the conqueror; and those among the guests who thought to notice this lame creature with the heart of a Beethoven would put up their glasses and give him a curious look as though he were a medium or a piece of china, and say to each other, to forget it the next moment—

"That poor mad cripple!—quite a genius! Odd fancy of Chandos to keep him, but certainly he conducts wonderfully well!"

"What a beautiful place!" cried the Queen of Lilies, as she entered, at the close of the concert, that room which simply a desire to be able to command perfect solitude, if he desired it, had made him deny to all guests, and even to all servants, unsummoned.

"Too beautiful to dedicate to solitude," she said, as he led her in with words of complimentary welcome. "How connoisseurs would envy all the Coustous and Canovas, all the pictures and bronzes, buried in this single room! Why your very choicest art-treasures are hidden here!"

"I believe they are. But the envy of the *virtuosi* would not enhance their beauty or my pleasure in it."

"No?" she did not understand him. To her a diamond was no more worth than a stone, unless it were seen and coveted of others. "This room is like a vision of Vathek. No wonder they call you a sybarite."

He laughed.

"Do they call me so? And yet I would have rather lived on a date in Pericles' Athens than have been king in Sybaris. Ah! I told you it was cruel kindness to come here, Lady Valencia; my Daphne will have no smile, and my Danaë no bloom, any longer. My art-idols will have no charm beside one memory."

He looked down on her with a glance that made his words no empty flattery, as they stood beside a writing-cabinet that had belonged to Tullia d'Arragona. She laid her hands on the manuscripts and papers that strewed it, and laughed, half-gaily, half-mournfully, as she touched them.

"But those papers contain what no woman will rival. An author always has one sovereign that no one can dethrone,—in his own dreams."

She must have known that it would have been hard for even a poet's imagining to conjure any fancy more fair than her own reality, where she stood leaning slightly down over the old ebony-and-gold cabinet of Strozzi's mistress, alone with the art which had no other story to tell than the love it embodied, no other thought to create than the eternal history of human passion,—alone with the golden lingering light of the sunset playing about her feet and shining in the deep-brown lustre of her glance.

He stooped towards her, made captive without reflection, without heed.

"But doubly happy the author who finds his fairest dream made real!"

At that moment through the open doorway floated Madame de la Vivarol, followed by Cos Grenvil and the Duke of Crowndiamonds.

"Ah, monsieur! so you have thrown this sacred and mystical chamber at last open to profane feet? How charming it is!—like a piece of description out of *Monte Cristo!*" she cried, with a charming carelessness, as she fluttered, butterfly-like, about the room, criticising a tazza, glancing at a manuscript, admiring a miniature, trying an ivory pistol, commenting on a statuette. "So this is your solitude!" she went on, remorselessly; "really, *mon ami*, it is more agreeable than most men's entertainments.



We shall know now how pleasant your retreat is when you are occupied—in solitude—with your *paperasses* and your palette!"

"Ah, madame," said Chandos, laughingly, though he knew very well what was concealed under that airy challenge, "fair memories will be left to my room, but its spell and its peace will be broken for ever. As I was saying to Lady Valencia, I can never summon shapes to paper or canvas now that its loneliness will be haunted with such recollections."

"*Mon ami*," said La Vivarol, with the prettiest mocking grace in the world, "are you so very constant to the absent?"

And while she floated hither and thither, fluttering over a *Vita Nuova*, rich in Attavante miniatures, lifting her eyeglass at a little Wouverman, murmuring, "*Que c'est joli que c'est joli*!" before a grand scene of David, and slightly shrugging her shoulders at a bewitching Greuze, because it was a different style of beauty from her own, none could have dreamed that madame had a trace of pique on her. Yet, as they left for their carriages a few moments later, it would have been hard to say which had the most bitter pang against her rival treasured in silence,—the fair Lily Queen, who had lost the one moment when warm words had so nearly been won on his lips, or the French countess, who had found another given the entrance to that writing-room to which admittance had been so often, and so steadily, though gaily, denied her.

As for Chandos, he consoled himself easily with the happy insouciance of his nature, and went down to dine at his *bonbonnière* at Richmond. Among his party was Beatrix Lennox, a clever woman and a brilliant,—a woman with the talent of Chevreuse and the fascination of

a L'Enclos; a woman whose wit was never weary, and whose voice charmed like the sound of a flute through a still, aromatic, tropical night; a woman in whose splendid eyes there came now and then, when she ceased to speak, a look of unutterable pain, a look that passed very quickly, too quickly to be ever seen by those around her.

Chandos—amused by those nearest to him, who laid themselves out to so amuse him with all the brightness of their ready *esprit*, all the gravity of their airy laughter, all the infectious mirth of vivacious *chansons*—was too well distracted to notice or perceive that Trevenna studiously, though with all his customary tact, prevented any opportunity occurring for Mrs. Lennox to approach her host, or be able to address him in any way apart. He did not notice, either, though she was a favourite with him, that the haughty, resistless, victorious *lionne*, usually so disdainful and so despotic in her imperious grace, allowed Trevenna to use an almost insolent off-hand *brusquerie* to her unreprieved, and once or twice took the cue of her words from him, and obeyed his glance as a proud forest-born deer tamed by captivity might obey the hand of its keeper, compulsorily but rebelliously.

Chandos had the too ready trustfulness of a woman; but he had nothing of that subtle power at the perception of trifles, and the clairvoyant divination of their meaning, which atone to women for the risks of their over-faith.

The world amused him so well, what need had he to probe beneath its surface or ask its complex springs? That work was Trevenna's business, and to Trevenna's taste.

As a boy, that alert humorist had never seen a conjurer's legerdemain but to buy the trick of it, a piece of machinery but to investigate its principle, a stage but to go behind the scenes, a watch but to break it in trying to find out its manufacture; he did the same now with

human life. All its weaknesses, all its crimes, all its secrets, all its intricacies and conspiracies and veiled motives and plausible pretexts, it was his delight to pierce and learn and uncover and hold in abject subjection. To walk as it were in the underground sewers of the moral nature, and to watch all the wheels within wheels of the world's rotation, was an exquisite amusement to Trevenna. Nor did he ever get cynical with it. He thought very badly of humanity, to be sure; but it tickled his fancy that men should be such rascals as he thought them; it never for an instant made him sour at it. He was, as Chandos had said, an odd mixture of Theophrastic bitterness and Plautus-like good humour. He never condemned anything; he only found everything out. He had not the slightest objection that men should be scoundrels; on the whole, it was more convenient that they should be so; all he cared was that he should be up to their moves.

Nor was it a brief or a light labour by which he became so. A marvellously unerring memory, an acumen of the finest intelligence, a universality that could adapt itself plially to all forms, a penetration that never erred, a logic that could never be betrayed into the *ignoratio elenchi*, and, above all, a light, off-hand, perfect tact that could successfully cover all these from view, were the severe acquirements that were necessities for his success; and by a perseverance as intense as ever scholar brought to his science, or warrior to his struggle, he had gained them in such proportion at least as any man can ever hope to attain them all. There was strong stuff, there was great stuff, in the man who could put himself voluntarily through such a course of training as Trevenna had now pursued through long years,—to the world's view of him an adventurer, an idler, a diner-out, a hanger-on to men of rank and riches, in real truth a man whom not

one trifle of the passing hour escaped, by whom the slightest thread that might be useful in the future was never neglected, and who, after pleasures and affronts in turn that would have alternately enervated and heart-sickened any other less sturdily in earnest than himself, could come back to his cheap lodgings to plunge into intellectual labour, and to grind political knowledge as arduously and as steadily as though he were a lad studying for his Greats at a university.

The qualities he brought to his career were admirable beyond all average of ordinary power; the purpose of his career was more questionable. He would have said, and so far with fair justice, that it was, at any rate, the same which sent Alexander into the heart of the East, which placed Mahomet at the head of the wondrous legions of El Islam, which sent William of Orange to the throne of Great Britain, and the young Corsican to the dais and diadem of Louis Quatorze,—the motive of self-aggrandisement.

And, in truth, there was in this good-humoured, impudent, imperturbable, brusque, amusing man-about-town, who jested to get a dinner and put up with slights to purchase a day's shooting, the same element of indomitability as there was in Cæsar, the same power of concentration as there was in Columbus, and the same strength of self-training as there was in Julian. Only his Rome was the House of Commons, his Terra Nuova was the table-land where adventurers were denied to mount, and his deities were Money, Success, and Vengeance,—gods, it must be confessed, in all ages fair to men as Venus Pandemos, and more potent with them than all the creeds from Cybèle's to Chrysostom's.

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## BOOK THE SECOND.

## CHAPTER I.

## Under the Waters of Nile.

It was night in the low, crooked, dirty, unsavoury court in which stood the little rickety door, with its yellow panes of opaque glass, that was lettered Tindall & Co. An unpretentious place, untempting, dusty, and boasting in no way of itself,—its shop or counting-house suggestive of no particular trade, but chiefly filled with a few old pictures, a few old blackened bronzes, a piece or two of quaint armour, a little china, and much lumber. These things, however, remained there week after week. The brown pictures, the cracked china, the old pair of Modenese carvings, the helmet, or the fiddle, were only trifles on the surface, immaterial garnishings to answer the curious eyes of the multitude when those eyes, in passing, peered in and wondered what was traded in behind the opaque panes of glass. Underneath them, as the crocodile sits hidden with the sullen, reddish waters and the broad, fan-like leaves of the Nile above his scaly head and opened jaws, so might be said to sit Tindall & Co., eating all manner of strange things that dropped between their fangs,—youth and age, broad estates and ancient halls, wooded acres and gallant names, boyhood with the gold on its hair, and manhood with the shot of the suicide through its heart, eating them all, and mashing them together impartially, and churning them all down without distinction into one vast, even, impotent, shapeless mass of ruin.

This was what Tindall & Co. did under the flowing mud-hued Nile-tide of London life, and then lay basking,

alligator-like, waiting for more. This is what Tindall & Co., and such-like spawn of Nile, can do under the beneficent laws which, by restricting usury with a penalty, compel despair to pay double for the straw it grasps at,—laws which forget that, despite them all, the supply will always continue to meet the demand, and that their only issue is to make the one who supplies insist on treble payment as indemnity for the risk he runs through them. Ah! wise, calm voice of Political Economy, will it ever be heard? will its true justice ever outweigh the gushing impulses of cruel sentiment? will it ever be known that its immutable partiality is as truly gentle as the world at present calls it hard? When it shall be, the crocodiles will be crushed in turn, and crocodile-tears flow no more; but the millennium is very far away.

The premises of Tindall & Co. were cut up into various small rooms; privacy was an essential of their pursuits. It would warn away the antelope that steals down to the treacherous edge to slake its thirst within fatal distance of the alligator's jaws, if it were to see signs of the bones and skin of a lately-devoured brother lying near. They were all dingy, dull, smoke-dried little chambers, with a musty, repellent odour that involuntarily brought remembrance of the Morgue. In one of them to-night, the poorest of the lot, which bore traces of constant occupation in its poor furniture, was the old Castilian Jew, standing in the tawny light of a hand-lamp burning near him. Before him, in the shadow, was a young boy, of seventeen or eighteen years, beautiful as a Murillo head, the appealing softness of an extreme youth blent in him with the fixed misery of a shameful grief. There were heavy tears on his dropped lashes, and his lips were slightly apart like those of one who is worn out and faint with pain. Between the two stood Trevenna, with his bright, open, plea-

sant face and its shrewd blue English eyes, dressed for the evening, as he leaned in comfortable indifference, like one who is master of the house and master of the situation, against the wooden ledge of the painted mantelpiece.

"Much more sensible to come back, little Benjamin," he said, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Never try dodging with *me*; it isn't the least bit of use. Only riles me, as the Yankees say, and can't serve you in the slightest. Bless your heart, my little felon, do you suppose if you were to hide yourself in the African sands, or bury yourself in the Arctic ice, *I* shouldn't ferret you out when I wanted you?"

His laughing, merry eyes flashed a single glance into the lad's drooped face; and the boy shuddered and trembled, and turned pale as though he were an accused between the irons, wrenched with another turn of the rack.

"Not the smallest use in dodging," pursued Trevenna, as good-naturedly and agreeably as though he offered him a glass of sherry. "Shows great inexperience to try it. World's made up of flies and spiders; you're a fly, and all the world's a net for you; glide through one web, another'll catch you. Listen; you'd better understand it once for all. Do what you like with yourself, go where you like, burn yourself up in the tropics, bury yourself down in the mines, grow old, marry, grow grey, get children, make money; but don't think to escape *me*. When I want you, or when you forfeit leniency, I shall have you. Just think! twenty years hence perhaps you may be fancying the thing blown over, you may be living in luxury, even, —who knows?—yonder there among your precious Spanish vines; you may be in love and have some soft Andalusian for your wife; you may have friends who think you a mirror of probity, brats who will own your name, all sorts of stakes in life, all sorts of ties to it;

and just then, if I want you—Presto! I shall be down upon you. So never feel sure, that's all; and never try dodging."

He watched the boy as he spoke, winding up all these fancies, so foreign to his natural speech, that he might turn with each one of them another grind of the rack to the soft and helpless nature before him. It amused him to see the agony they caused. The boy shrank farther and farther, like a hunted, stricken creature, trembling and paralyzed, his eyes fascinated on his tormentor as though by a spell. The old man stood mute and motionless, but an anguish greater even than the youth's was on him in his silence; and, as his eyes turned with piteous entreaty, his dry lips murmured, unconsciously—

"Sir, sir! as you are merciful!—he is so young."

"Precisely because he *is* so young, my good Ignatius, must we have him know that, live as long as he may, he'll never be free," retorted Trevenna, pleasantly. "He has a long life before him, and he might get fancying that all this would wear out; but it won't. Paper isn't sand, and that little document of his will always stand."

The boy, Agostino, as he was called, the only living thing of the old man's blood and name, looked up with a low, gasping cry. This merciless seizure of all his future, this damning denial of all earthly hope, this chain that wound about all years to come ere yet they had dawned on him, this despairing eternity of bondage, were greater than he could bear. He threw up his arms with a passionate moan, and flung himself at Trevenna's feet, his bright brow bent down on the dust, his hands clasping the hem of his tyrant's coat.

"Kill me! O God of Israel! kill me at one blow. I cannot live like this."

Trevenna moved his foot a little, as though he pushed



away a whining spaniel, and laughed as he looked down on him.

"*Cher Agostino*, you would make a capital actor. I think I'll put you on the stage; you'd be a first-rate *Romeo*, or *Ion*."

The kick, the laugh, the words, in the moment of his intense torture, stung and lashed the submissive spirit of the Israelite race, and the terror-stricken bondage of the boy, into a passionate life that broke all bonds. He sprang to his feet, standing there where the tawny circle of the oil-light fell, like a young David, his rich lips quivering, his curls flung back, his cheek with its glowing Murillo tint deepened to a scarlet fire.

"What have I done?" he cried aloud, while his voice rang piteously through the chamber. "What have I done, to be tortured like this? Not a tithe of what is done here every day, every hour! If I *be* a thief, where is the wonder? Is there not robbery round me from noon to night? Is not every breath of air in this accursed den charged with some lie, some theft, some black iniquity? Hundreds come here in their ruin; is one ever spared? Is not a trade in men's necessities driven here from year's end to year's end? Is not poverty betrayed, and ignorance tempted, and honour bought and sold here every week? How could I learn honesty where all is fraud and sin? how could I keep stainless where everything is corruption? If I am a thief and a felon, what are *you*?"

The bold words poured out in anguish, their English speech tinged and mellowed with the Castilian accent. Suffering had made him desperate; he writhed and turned and struck his bondmaster. The old man heard him, trembling and aghast; his brown face blanched, his teeth shook; he looked up at Trevenna with a piteous supplication.

"Oh, sir! oh, my master, forgive him! He is but a child, and he knows not what he says—"

"He will know what he has to pay for it. Out of my way, you young hound."

The answer was not even angered, not even jarred from his customary bantering *bonhomie*; but at the glance of the keen blue eye that accompanied it, all the sudden fire, all the momentary rebellion, of the boy died out; he felt his own utter powerlessness against the master he contended with; he cowered like a beaten dog, dropped his head on his breast, and burst into a passion of tears.

"Shut up that," said Trevenna, carelessly, while, as much unmoved as though the young Jew's fiery words had never scathed his ear, he took out some papers from his inner coat-pocket and tossed them to Ignatius Mathias. "Here, look alive. Take these; and don't do anything to little Dallerstone yet awhile. If he come here, mind he doesn't know anything about those signatures; let him understand that, quite as a matter of kindness, I looked in to see if you could be induced to take the screw off him; let him think that I'd infinite trouble to get you to do anything of the kind; and leave him to feel that you'll very likely be down on him, and that his only safety's in me. Look sharp; you understand?"

The Hebrew bent his head, holding the papers in his withered hands; they were the bills of young Charlie Dallerstone, freshly renewed on Chandos' acceptance.

"One thing more," went on Trevenna, looking at his watch; for he was going to dine in Park Lane, and it was nearly nine. "I find Sir Philip looks booked to make a very sure thing at the Ducal. His French horse is sure to win, and he may strike a vein of luck again. Catch him while he's down; call in his 'stiff' to-morrow. He must sell up; he can't help himself. As for Lady Vantyre,

—one doesn't deal with women usually; but she's been going it very fast in Venezuelan bonds and California scrip. She wants some ready, and she's quite safe; she'll come into no end of money by-and-by. I buy and sell for her in the City, so I know to a T what she's worth. That's all, I think. You may come to me the day after to-morrow, if you've anything to say. Good-bye, young one; and just remember, if you don't want to see the hulks,—don't dodge!”

With which valediction, Trevenna sauntered out of the room, drawing on his gloves, to get into his night-cab and drive to one of those charming dinners of princes, peers, wits, authors, and artists, all chosen for some social gift of brilliance, for which the house of Chandos was celebrated.

“What an angel Charlie will think me!” thought Trevenna, with a laugh, as his dashing cab clattered his way from Tindall & Co.'s, where he had stopped openly and left his thorough-bred high stepper to dance impatiently before the door in full view of any passer-by. He only went on Charlie's business.

Those whom he had left in the little, close, and ill-illuminated chamber were silent many moments. That laughing, frank, clever face of their tyrant had left a shadow there dark as night. The two forms were in strange contrast with the meagre commonplace of their surroundings,—two figures of Giorgione and of Rubens painted in upon the drab-hued dusty panels of the miserable City office-room. The youth Agostino sat motionless, his head bowed down upon his arms. The old man watched him, his eyes, with all the yearning tenderness of a woman in them, filling with the slow, salt tears of age. He was a hard man, a cunning man may-be, a man chilled by a long life of opprobrium, of struggle, of persecution, of pain; but he was soft in his heart as a mother to that beautiful lad,

the last flower of a doomed and died-out house. He loved him with a great love, this only living son of his young, dead wife,—this Benoni, who had come to him, as it seemed, with all the perfume and the poetry of his lost Spain shed on his vivid beauty and seeming to revive in his happy grace.

Therefore in his sin he had clung to him, in his shame he had no reproach to deal him; and through him, for him, by him, the grand old Israelite became weak as water, facile as a reed, in the hands of an inexorable taskmaster, who was as exacting as an Egyptian of old.

He laid his hand on the boy's bowed head, and moved the thick curls tenderly.

"You were too rash, my Agostino; it is not for the helpless to incense the strong. I trembled as I heard. My child, my child, your sole hope is in his sparing you."

Agostino lifted his head, the tears heavy on his lids, his lips swollen and parted.

"Forgive me, father, I was mad! And I only said the truth to him, though the God of Truth is my witness that I had no thought to wound *you*, or to mean *you*, by my words. If what I see here be evil, what I learn from you is good: so lofty that it should outweigh it a thousand-fold. My guilt is my own; I meant no reproach to you."

"I know, I know," said the old man, wearily. "But you angered him, my child; I saw it by his eye, and—and—we are in his power. He has been good to us,—good to us. We are bound to bear the stripes that he may deal."

It was said patiently, firmly, and in sincerity. Trevenna had bought his invaluable tool by a few arts which were on the surface benevolent and lenient, and were in literal fact far-sighted plans to purchase a fine instrument at a small price. But the perception of this, even where it dawned on him, did not avail to shake the old Israelite's

sense of grateful bondage; nor would it have done so even had it not been accompanied with the auxiliaries of necessity and fear which through Agostino he was moved by as well.

"Good!" the youth's eyes flashed, and his mouth quivered. "I would to Heaven, but for the shame on you, that he would give me up to justice, and send me out to any fate, rather than force me to live in this yoke an hour longer. It kills me! it kills me! Under his eye I have no will; under his law my very breath seems his. What is it to be *spared*, to be dogged by such a doom as he told out to me?—a never-ending dread!"

The old man shuddered, and on his face there deepened that terrible, haunted look of fear for one dearer than himself, which had gleamed out from the light of his sunken eyes throughout Trevenna's presence.

"Agostino, the life of a convict for *you*! The irons on your young limbs, the brutal work for your delicate strength, the captivity, the travail, the shame, the misery—"

His voice failed him, he could not think of the near approach of such a doom for the only thing left to him on earth without his anguish mastering him. Agostino trembled and shrank back, crouching, bowed, and prostrate, in the same paralysis of horror which had subdued him when Trevenna had spoken. He could not have faced his fate. There was on the Spanish splendour of his boyish loveliness a wavering, womanish weakness, a cowardice, the result, not of selfishness, but of changing and painful sensitiveness; it was this instability, this cowardice, which had drawn him into a crime wholly at variance with the candid tenderness of his regard, and which made him, through his fear, ductile as wax to mould even into the very thing he loathed. He might say that he longed for justice in the stead of being spared by one who played with him in his suffering as a cat with

a bird; but he would have clung to exemption at all cost had he been put really to the test, and accepted life on any terms to escape the horror and the ignominy of public retribution.

The old Israelite looked down on him, and, as he saw that pitiful, tremulous abasement before the mere conjured vision of a felon's life, lifted his withered hands upward in a grand, unconscious gesture of imprecation and of prayer.

"May the God of Israel forsake me in my last extremity, if I ever forsake him by whom you have been spared your doom!"

The vow was uttered in all the dignity and in all the simplicity of truth. No matter what his taskmaster might be to others, no matter how cruel the tasks he set, no matter how hard the lashes he gave, no matter how weary the labour he imposed, to Ignatius Mathias he was sacred; he had spared Agostino.

In that moment of his oath of fidelity, the Castilian Jew, the white-haired usurer, the world-worn toiler in many cities, the despised and reviled Hebrew, reached a moral height of which John Trevenna never had a glimpse.

He paused a while, gazing down upon the boy. For many weeks they had been parted, for the first time in their lives, and severed in the tortures of suspense; and the sight of him, even in their present anguish, even in the bitterness of the guilt which had stained this opening life with its blot, was sweet as water in a dry land to the sear and aching heart of the old man. With his own hands he brought him wine and bread, and bade him eat, breaking through all the custom and ceremonies of his people, and tending him with woman-like gentleness. It was thus that he had made Agostino dependent and fragile as a girl, and power-

less to guide himself through the rough winds and subtle temptations of the world. Amidst the deprivation and misery that had fallen to the lot of the Israelite, the child who had the eyes of his lost darling had never needed warmth and light, and the sight of flowers, and the song of birds, and the bloom of summer fruits. Starving on a morsel of dried fish himself, he had bought the purple grapes of their own sierras for Agostino. And there was something caressing, vivid, engaging, appealing in the boy, which had repaid this fully in affection, even whilst he had gone farthest from straight paths.

He drank the Montepulciano wine that was brought him now, and with it youth and hope recovered their unstrung powers, and the dread despair that had pressed on him in Trevenna's presence relaxed. Eat he could not; but as he leaned there, resting his Murillo head upon his arm, and absently gazing at the red flicker of the lamp-flame in the wine, something of light flashed over his face; he raised his head with an eager gesture.

"Father, I have a thought! Listen. Last year, when I was in the Vega, I met an Englishman; it was in the autumn morning, and I was lying, doing nothing, among the grass as he rode by. He rode slowly, and I saw him well. I never saw a face like his; to look at it was like hearing music. He caught my eyes, and stopped his horse and asked the way towards Granada; he had fallen on a by-path through the vines. I could scarcely answer him for looking at his face; it was so beautiful. He noticed it, perhaps, for he asked me what I thought of, that I was so absent; and I told him truly, 'I was thinking you look like David,—a poet-king.' He laughed, and said none ever paid him a more graceful flattery; but it was not flattery: I *was* thinking so. Then he smiled, and looked more closely at me. 'You are of the pure Sephardim

race, are you not?" he asked me, and I wondered how he knew; for he was not one of us, but an azure-eyed, golden-haired Gentile. I never saw him again in Spain; but this year I saw a gentleman coming down the steps of one of the great mansions to go to his carriage in the gaslight, and I knew him again; he was in court dress, and I asked who he was of the people. They said he was very famous, very generous, very high in all distinctions, and that none ever asked him a kindness in vain. He is great—you can tell that by his glance; he is gentle—you can tell that by his smile. I know his worst foe might trust to his honour and trust to his pity. I will go to him and tell him all, and see if he can free me. He knows *him*, for he was with him that night."

"And his name, the crowds told you?"

"Is Chandos."

The old Hebrew, who had listened, half beguiled as by a poetic talé, started, his hands clenched on the papers that had been left with him: a change of alarm and of eagerness flashed over the dark olive of his inscrutable face; his voice rose harsh and imperative in his anxiety, while a pang of shame and of disquietude shook its tone.

"You dream like a child, Agostino! Chandos! yes, *he* knows him, and by that very reason you must never approach him. You have no choice but obedience; you are in his power, and his first law is silence on all that connects him with us. Break it by a whisper, and he will spare you not one moment more. Besides, this Chandos, this fine gentleman, this delicate aristocrat,—he would shut his doors to a beggared Jew!"

"He would not," murmured the boy in a soft whisper.

"No matter whether he would or no! Go near him, and the worst fate you dread will teach you the cost of disobedience. Ah, Agostino, listen. Be patient, be do-



cile; bear the yoke yet a while, and I will buy your safety with my labour; I will earn your liberation with my service. Only be patient, and you shall not suffer."

The first words had been spoken with the stern authority of the Mosaic code; the latter closed in the yearning tenderness of his infinite devotion to his only son.

Agostino bowed his head in silence; it was not in him to resist; it was greatly in him to fear. His head sank down upon his arms once more in the abandonment of a dejection the more bitter and more prostrated because the gleam of a youth's romantic hope had flickered over it and had died out; he thought still that the stranger, who had seemed to him like the poet-king of his own Israel when the crown was first set on his proud, sunlit, unworn brow, could raise him from his despair and loose his fetters. The yellow lamp burned sullenly on, its thin smoke curled up in the leaden, noisome air of the pent city alley; the night passed on, and the boy still sat listless and heart-broken there, while Ignatius Mathias, bent above his desk, passed back to the world of hard acumen, of merciless exaction, of unerring requisition, of grinding tribute: with those exact figures, with those names so fair in the world's account, so fouled in his, with those passages which wrote out the ruin of those in whom the world saw no flaw, the evil entered into his soul, and the higher nature perished. He laboured to free his darling: what cared he how many living hearts might have the life-blood pressed out of them under the weights he was employed to pile, so that with that crimson wine his taskmaster was pleased and satiated?

And the church-clocks of the empty city tolled dully through the misty night the quarters and hours one by one; and as the lad Agostino sat dreaming of that autumn morning in the Vega, with the hot light on the

bronze leaves and purple clusters of the vines, and the joyous song of a muleteer echoing from the distance, while the Moorish ruins of mosque and castle rose clear against the cloudless skies, the grand, bent form of the old Israelite, once majestic as any prophet's of Palestine, stooped over the crumpled papers that bore the signature—  
"ERNEST CHANDOS."

## CHAPTER II.

### The Dark Diadem.

ASCOT week came, and at the cottage which Chandos usually took for the races, Trevenna, with five or six others, spent the pleasantest days in the calendar. The gayest and most fashionable racing-time in the world, with its crowds of dainty beauties and its aristocratic throngs, was nowhere more fully enjoyed than at that pretty Ascot lodge, with its merry breakfasts before the drags came round, and its witty dinners after the day was over. Dubosc, the great *chef* of Park Lane, went thither daily in his little brown brougham to superintend the meals of his master and his guests, and throw in that finishing artistic touch which made them unsurpassable. The party was perfectly chosen, and perfectly attuned to each other: it amused Chandos admirably, as he was used to be amused by life. From the time he was three years old, when princesses had played ball with him and ambassadors bribed him with *bonbons* to give them a kiss, he had been accustomed to live among those who beguiled his time for him without effort; and the world seemed naturally to group itself round him in changing *tableaux* that never left him a dull moment. He had no need to exert himself to seek pleasure; pleasure came unbidden in every varying form to him, seductive and protean as a coquette.

Chandos loved horses, rode them superbly, and had all the lore of the desert; but the slang and the society of the turf he abhorred. He hated the roar of a ring, the uproar of a betting-room, the jargon of a trainer, the intrigues of the flat. But the Clarencieux establishment had long before his time been famous for good things; his horses had carried off all the best stakes in various years at Newmarket, Doncaster, Epsom, and Goodwood. And now at Ascot, far and away at the head of the field stood, almost untouched by any rival for the Cup, his famous four-year-old Sir Galahad.

It caused him no uneasiness that in certain quarters there was a disposition to offer against the favourite, and that this was done with a regularity and a caution which might have suggested the fact of a commission being out to lay against him. He noticed it, indeed, but with that carelessness which made him too facilely persuaded; and was content to believe the explanation Trevenna offered him, that a rumour had got abroad of Sir Galahad having a touch of cough.

"Very good thing for us, too," said Trevenna, shrugging his shoulders. "Galahad's right as a trivet; and if we can heighten the whisper to influenza, and take all the odds against him, there'll be a pot of money to show——"

He stopped: he perceived that for once his acumen had been faulty, and had overreached itself; he saw that he had tried a dangerous path with a man who, in all other ways, was so pliant to his hand through the weaknesses of *insouciance* and of indolence. Chandos turned to him with a look on his face that he had never seen there. "Roguery makes a poor jest," he said, coldly. "If any one win a shilling by the rumour, knowing its falsity, he may take his name off my visiting-list. I will see that the horse is given his next morning gallop over the Heath

as publicly as possible, so that it may be known he is in perfect condition."

And he did so. Trevenna the Astute had made a false step for the sole time in their intercourse, and thought to himself: "Chivalry on the flat! If it ever come into fashion, we may sow wheat on the Beacon Course and grow tares by Tattenham Corner. Mercy! what a fool he is, with all his talents!"

He did seem a very great fool to Trevenna; but then, as Trevenna reflected, there was not much wonder in that, after all, for the man was a poet—in his view synonymous with saying a man was a lunatic.

"Looks well, Ernest," said the Duke of Castlemaine, where he stood, among other members of the Jockey Club, eyeing Sir Galahad as he came on the Heath on the morning of the Cup day.

"He can't be more fit," answered Chandos, with his race-glass up; "and I don't see what there is to beat him."

"Nothing," said John Trevenna, who was always pleasantly positive to men about their own successes: there is not a more agreeable social quality. "I think the field's hardly strong enough to do him full credit; there is scarce a good thing in it. Lotus-Lily's pretty, no doubt—very taking-looking, and her arms and knees are good; but she won't stay."

With which Trevenna, after his general trenchant fashion, clenched the matter, his authoritativeness being usually forgiven for its exceeding accuracy: he was never found wrong. But it highly displeased the grand old duke, the longest-lived and highest-born of all the dons of the Jockey Club, to have this audacious dictator dealing out his opinions unbidden at his elbow. He hated the fellow, and hated to see him there—so much, indeed, that he would have found means to turn him out of the stand,

had he not been brought thither by and through his grandson. He pointed with his glass to a long, low, rakish-looking chestnut that, with hood and quarter-piece on, was being walked quietly and unnoticed about, forgotten among the ruck, while Sir Galahad, Lotus-Lily, and the rest of the cracks, drew the eyes and awoke the admiration of the Heath.

"You are false to your order, sir," he said, grimly. "There's the horse you should back, if you were true to your form—a 'rank outsider,' entered under an *alias*, came from nobody-knows-where, and foisted into running for a cup while he should be standing in a cab. You should have sympathy, sir!"

Trevenna could have hurled a curse at his white hairs, with the snarl of a furious dog, so bitterly the arrow rankled, so keenly he felt that this man alone read him as he was. But he had trained himself better; he laughed without a sign of temper.

"An awkward brute! I don't fancy him. Who likes their own order, duke? You find *yours* so dull sometimes that you come to the brains of Nobodies to amuse you!"

"Fellow can always hit you back again," thought his Grace, "and never shows when he's struck. But that overdone good humour means mischief: if a man smile under an affront, he may be above, but he's much more likely to be beneath, resenting it. Now, I'd have respected the fellow if he had showed fight in hard earnest; but he laughs at too much not to mean to take his measure out for it some day."

The saddling-bell rang, the telegram-board was hoisted up, the start was given; the field swept out like a fan, disentangling one from another, a confused mass, for a moment, of bright and various hues. Then from the press there launched forward, with the well-known, light,

stretching stride that covered distance so marvellously, the Clarencieux favourite, shaking himself clear of all the running, and leading at a canter, which, unextended and easy as it was, left even Lotus-Lily and Queen of the Fairies behind by two lengths. All eyes on the course and the stands were fastened on the match between the cracks. Scarce any one noted among the ruck one chestnut outsider, ugly, awkward, but with great girth of barrel and power of action, which, ridden with singularly fine judgment by a Yorkshire jock of a little known and merely local reputation, was quietly singling out from the rest, and warily waiting on, the two favourites—so warily, that imperceptibly, yet surely, he quickened his pace, passed the Queen of the Fairies, and gained upon Lotus-Lily till he struggled with her neck by neck. So little known was he, so dark had he been kept, that as he ran even with the mare, two lengths behind the Clarencieux crack, half the multitude upon the Heath knew neither his name nor owner, and the fashionable gatherings on the stands looked at their cards bewildered as to whom this outsider belonged to, with his feather-weight in the unrecognised grey-and-yellow, that was almost even with the famous blue-and-gold of Chandos's popular colours.

Fleet as the lightning the three swept on, no other near them even by a bad third, their jocks becoming but mere specks of colour, whose course was watched with breathless, strained anxiety. Extended now to the uttermost of his splendid pace, Sir Galahad, conscious for the first time of a rival not to be disdained, and perhaps scarcely to be beaten, ran like the wind, the Diadem chestnut gaining on him at every yard, the mare behind by hopeless lengths. Chandos leaned forward, and his breath came and went quickly. The Duke muttered in the depths of his snow-white beard—

"The dark one wins, by God!"

The dark one did win. Nearer and nearer, faster and faster, the ungainly and massive limbs of the Yorkshire horse brought him alongside the graceful and perfect shape of the Ascot favourite; and from the vast crowds upon the purple heather of the Heath the shouts echoed the old Duke's words, "The outsider wins!" "The outsider has it!" A moment, and they ran neck to neck; the gallant crack of the Clarencieux stable, with all the metal in him roused to fire, strove for a second manfully with this unknown and unexpected foe; then, with a single forward spring, like magic, the outsider outstripped him by a head, and ran in at the distance, winner of the Ascot cup.

"A very clever horse," said Chandos, calmly, as he dropped his race-glass.

"D—n you!" thought one who stood next him. "There is no fun in beating you; you never *will* show when you're down."

"Owned by some very clever rascals," said the Duke, as he shut up his *lorgnon* with a clasp, while his eyes filled with the hot fiery wrath that in his youth had been swift and terrible as a tempest. "The chestnut has been kept dark as night. Mr. Trevenna, why did you not take my advice and back your own order? The outsider wins you see!"

"But I did not believe in him, sir; nor do I now. I shall hope you will have inquiries made, for there must be something very dark here. Galahad *looked* well ridden; and if well ridden, there was nothing, I should have thought, on the turf could have beaten him."

"This is no case for the Jockey Club—you know that, sir, as well as I do," said his Grace, sharply, with peremptory *hauteur*. "The chestnut's won fairly, so far as the running goes; the roguery has been beforehand."

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders.

"It must have taken a deuced deal of roguery to have kept such a flier as that ugly brute dark all the three years of his life. Chandos, how cool you are! If I owned Sir Galahad, I should tear that Diadem's jock out of saddle."

Chandos lifted his eyebrows.

"My bay is beaten; there is no more to be said. The best thing to do is to forget it as soon as possible. I will go and talk to the ladies: they always gild the bitter pills of one's adversities."

"Ernest, do you know I have a strong belief that your friend is a most consummate scoundrel?" said the Duke of Castlemaine, with emphasis, as he took him aside a moment before dinner in the drawing-room of the Ascot cottage.

Chandos looked at him in excessive surprise. "My dear Duke, that is not the way I can hear any friend spoken of, even by you."

"Pshaw!" said his Grace, with his fiery wrath lighting again those leonine eyes that had flashed over the ranks of Soult's and Junot's armies as he led his dragoons down on to the serried square. "I suppose, if I see your friends forging your name, then I am to be delicate to warn you? You are as blind as a woman, Ernest. I will stake you ten thousand to nothing that that fellow Trevenna is at the bottom of this affair with the dark horse."

"Trevenna!" echoed Chandos, in amazement, yet amusedly. "What should he gain by doing or knowing of such a thing? He has all the confidence of my trainer. If he wants to make money on the turf, he would have made it scores of times ere this on my cracks. Besides, think what a horrible imputation!"

"His shoulders are broad enough to bear it," said the



Duke, grimly: "they have borne worse before now, I dare say. Where did you pick the fellow up?"

"I met him abroad." Chandos would no more have told *how* they met at *rouge et noir*, and how he rescued the young English traveller from a debtors' prison, than he would have counted the glasses of wine Trevenna drank at his table.

"Humph—without introduction?"

"Well, one makes many acquaintances so on the Continent." He smiled as he thought that their only introduction had been through the Baden bank and Baden prison.

"Certainly; but we don't often bring them home with us," rejoined his Grace, with a still grim significance. "What account did you have from him of himself?"

"Really, I have forgotten, I was only a boy,—eighteen or nineteen, I think."

The Duke tapped his Louis Quatorze snuff-box with an ominous dissatisfaction.

"You are a very clever man, Ernest; but you are too easily fooled, if you will pardon my saying so. You can believe it or disbelieve it, as you please; but I am as certain as that I stand on this hearth-rug that the fellow you defend knows more than he ought about the history and the running of that d—d Yorkshire chestnut."

"It is your over-kindness for me, my dear Duke, that makes you so unusually suspicious. I wish I were as satisfied of every one's good will to me as I am of poor Trevenna's. Good heavens! I would as soon believe that my butler plans to poison me in my champagne, and that my valet means to assassinate me as I dress for dinner!"

He laughed lightly as he spoke, and turned to his other guests, who just then entered the drawing-room,—among them Trevenna himself.

The dinner was of the choicest. Dubosc, with a touch of kindly feeling that this great master was never without, having heard of the turf disappointments of an employer who seldom failed to appreciate his genius, tendered consolation in delicate thoughtfulness, by a sudden and marvellous inspiration of artistic invention, producing results with a *turbot* such as Europe had never heard or conceived, and to which he positively attended with his own hands throughout the critical moments of preparation, watched breathlessly by his satellites and subordinates. Chandos and his guests were connoisseurs, on whom such an *épreuve positive*, to use Brillat-Savarin's term, could not be tried but with fullest success. Chandos sent a message of appreciation to the great *chef* himself; and Dubosc was conscious that the employer who could have remembered a horse's running ill, while he was consoled with such a triumph as the new *turbot au Clarenceux*, would have been a man whose soul was dead indeed.

"He *felt* it?" asked the master of the kitchen of the stately fellow-functionary in black, with the silver chain of office round his neck, who brought him the message of recognition. "You think he felt it! There is so much in soul!"

"I am sure he felt it," replied the other solemnly. "He has always proper feeling on those matters."

"Yes," sighed Dubosc, "but he has not the devotion that one could wish; a fine taste, but careless. He thinks too much of pictures and statues, and all those trifles, to bring his mind rightly to the great science."

"There is something in that," assented Silver-Chain, regretfully. "To see it really felt, you should have seen that little vulgar creature, that Trevenna, taste it. *There was an épreuve!*"

"Ah," sighed Dubosc, still, "but it is sad when the

good taste goes out of the great orders! He felt it, did he? That man will have a career!"

Dubosc's *éprouvette* did not fail to restore the life and wit to the party which it had in some degree lost by the losing of Galahad; for all had laid more or less heavy sums on the favourite. Gaiety and *bon mots* resumed their customary reign. Chandos always lent himself quickly with the easiest will to be consoled; and the hours sparkled along on swift feet and to pleasant cadence, despite the disaster of the Cup-day. Trevenna was in the highest spirits, which he checked slightly when he caught the azure flash of the Duke's eyes, but not enough to prevent his being the salt and savour of the dinner-party, as was his custom everywhere. They lingered long over their pine-apples and peaches, their Lafitte and Johannisberger; and after coffee they played whist in the pretty little Ascot drawing-room till the sun looked in through the grape-tendrils and vine-leaves about the casements; and by the dawn Chandos had forgot his first *contretemps*, his first annoyance, as though it had never been.

In the sunny summer morning, as Trevenna sauntered into his bed-room, he tossed thirty sovereigns he had won from his host at whist down on his dressing-table, and, throwing himself into his arm-chair, indulged in a hearty peal of laughter, that rang out through the open window towards the quiet solitary heather-purpled expanse of the Heath.

"Sold the whole turf, by Jove!" he murmured; "and forty thousand netted by commission, as I live, if there's a farthing! What a day's work! Trevenna, *bon enfant*, really you are a clever fellow."

He admired himself, with a cordial, almost wondering, admiration that was very different from vanity, and more like the self-content and self-applause with which a man

who has been up every *col* and peak in the Alpine range regards the names of his hazardous and successful feats burnt in on the shaft of his Alpenstock. He laughed again, at himself, when he lay back in the cosy depths of his chair, with his hands plunged into his trousers-pockets, and genuine self-satisfaction brightly set on every line of his face.

There is an exhilaration to the heart of the successful engineer who sees every morass drained, every ravine bridged, every girder made strong, every obstacle overcome, by his own indomitable energy, and watches the viaduct of his own rearing and planning span the mighty distance that seemed at first to laugh his puny efforts to conquer it to scorn. This was the exhilaration Trevenna felt now. That he was reaching his success by dark, by crooked, by unscrupulous ways, took nothing from his enjoyment. They were to him what the morass, the ravine, and the quicksands are to the engineer. Had his road been straight and smooth, where would have been this joyous excitement in his own victories, this triumphant zest in his own engineering science?

As he took off his dress-coat, undid his neck-tie, and lighted a cigar, he pulled the curtains aside and leaned out of the window into the soft summer-dawn air. Not that he cared a whit for the heliotrope and mignonette odours rising from the garden beneath, for the dews on the blossoming lindens, for the sunrise on the bloom of the heather; those things were to Chandos's taste, not to his; but he liked to look at that quiet deserted Heath, where the dark Diadem had borne off the cup from the favourite. It had put forty thousand in his pocket, or, rather, in those far-away American and Indian markets where the penniless man-about-town put every penny even that he won at whist or loo, in sure and secret

speculations; but it had a still sweeter pleasure than lay in the money for him.

"So the outsider beat the Clarencieux crack!" he thought, with a smile. "A prophecy! Duke, I won't quarrel with you: I'll back my order to win."

### CHAPTER III.

#### Butterflies on the Pin.

"ERNEST, are you going to marry?" asked his Grace, dryly, in the bay-window of White's.

"Marry? Heaven forbid!"

"Then don't go after that beautiful daughter of Ivors. She will marry you in a month or two more, if you do, whether you wish it or not."

Chandos moved restlessly; he did not like the introduction of painful topics, and marriage was a very painful one in his view.

"If you *do* marry," pursued the Duke, remorselessly, "take the Princess Louise; she is lovelier than anything else the sun shines on, and has the only rank from which a woman can love *you* without a suspicion of interested motives."

"My dear Duke, I am totally innocent of the faintest intentions to marry anybody!"

Nevertheless, the subject was not acceptable to him, and he looked a little absently out into St. James's Street with a certain shade of uncertainty and of restlessness on him; whereas the moment previous he had been watching the women in their carriages through his eye-glass, with the idlest and easiest languor of a warm day towards the close of the season.

"Marry! No; not for a universe," mused Chandos. A few hours afterwards he entered his house in Park Lane, to make his toilette for a dinner at Buckingham

Palace, and turned with a sudden thought to his *maître d'hôtel*, as he passed him in the hall. "Telegraph to Ryde, Wentwood, for them to have the yacht ready; and tell Alexis to prepare to start with me to-morrow morning. I shall go to the East."

His yacht was always kept in sailing-order, and his servants were accustomed to travel into Asia Minor or to Mexico at a moment's notice. Chandos was used to say, very justly, that the chief privilege of money was that it made you quit of the obligation to meditate a thing five minutes before you did it. Looking long at anything, whether travel or what not, always brushes the bloom off it. He liked to wake in the morning and, if the fancy took him, be away without a second's consideration to the glow of the new Western world or the patriarchal poetry of the East; and so well were his wishes always provided for that he went to sleep in one place and unclosed his eyes in another, almost as though he possessed the magic floating carpet of Prince Hassan.

The next morning the *Aphrodite* steamed out of Ryde harbour on the way to Italy, the Levant, and Constantinople, while its owner lay under an awning, with great lumps of ice in his golden cool Rhine wine, and the handsome eyes of Flora de l'Orme flashing laughter down on him while she leaned above, fanning his hair with an Indian feather-screen. The Duke's words had acted like a spell; but in his abrupt departure there was one person he had not forgotten. On his dressing-table lay a note to Trevenna, bidding him make use of his moors in Inverness-shire with the Twelfth as he pleased, or, if he preferred it, give the Scottish shootings to any friend he preferred, and take any guests he liked down to Clarendieux for the magnificent preserves of that ancient place.

These reversions and donations of windfalls and of pleasant places to lend or to invite to were fast making Trevenna very popular among that large class of men-on-the-town—dandies, do-nothings, authors, artists, and club-loungers—who have a certain reputation that floats them in the world, but no certainty of *entrée* to the good houses, and no means to purchase for themselves the pleasures of the moors and coverts. It began to get him courted among them; and he was a very genial host, royally lavish with Chandos's wines, most good-naturedly ready with offers of hospitality to Chandos's empty houses, so much so that men almost forgot, while they stayed with him, that wines and houses were not both his own.

"Gone to the East! By Jove, I'll go and find the Chesterton," thought Trevenna, with all the relish of a schoolboy for sowing mischief, as he read the note and heard of his patron's departure. He was a little sorry Chandos had gone; he never liked losing him from under his eyes; but he was fully consoled by the prospect of reigning as viceroy at Clarencieux, and of seeing the mortification of the two daughters of Ivors. They were as poor as rats; they could never do him any good. Trevenna felt at liberty to tease them just as he liked. A restriction was too often put on his merry malicious mousing by a prudential recollection of the social status of his mice, and of the use they might be to him in nibbling a way for him into patrician pantries. Here the mice were very poor: so he tracked Lady Chesterton and her sister to a garden-party, and ate his pine-apple in most admirably feigned carelessness and unconsciousness close to the two ladies under a Lebanon cedar. He knew the consternation he should scatter through society by his news.

"I don't see Mr. Chandos here this morning," said Lady Chesterton, turning to him with a bland smile, condescending to be civil because she was curious. She was also a little uneasy; otherwise, be sure, she would never have had recourse to that "vulgar little toady," as her ladyship designated the acute outsider.

"No, he isn't here," assented Trevenna, indifferently. He had now put this handsome empress butterfly on the point of his pin, and went leisurely about it.

"He is well, I hope?" she pursued.

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders. "Never was ill in his life, that I know of; perfect constitution."

"What a rude insufferable bear!" thought the unhappy butterfly; but she was still more uneasy than ever, and had no recourse so good as the bear: so she resumed her inquiries. "Do you know where he is to-day? I have something to tell him about Rose Berri china."

"Your ladyship must send it by post, then." And Trevenna laughed to himself as he saw the first irrepressible writhe of his victim on the pin.

"By post! Has he left town?"

Trevenna looked at his watch.

"By this time he is midway across to L'Orient. He has taken his yacht to go down south and eastward."

"So early!" Trained and icy woman of the world though she was, she could not repress the pallor that blanched her lip, the anxiety that loomed in her handsome eyes. The Queen of Lilies stood near. Hearing also, she was silent and very pale.

"Well, Ascot was late," answered Trevenna, cheerfully. "He generally does stay for Goodwood, to be sure; but, you see, he has had so many London seasons, and there's such hard running made on him, I think he gets sick of it."



This thrust the pins in cruelly, indeed, through the delicate wings of the brilliant butterflies. "That coarse horror!" thought Lady Chesterton, with a shiver of disgusted wrath; but her heart was very heavy, and she had to conceal her chagrin as best she might with all the gay garden-groups fluttering around her and viewing her impaled. "Will he be away long?" she asked of her tormenter.

"Oh, dear, yes," said Trevenna, carelessly. "Gone to his summer palace on the Bosphorus; takes the Morea and the Levant on the way. Poetic man, you know! likes that sort of thing; loves Greece; enjoys Corfu. I hate 'em both. Snakes and old stones in the one; rocks, rags, and bad ragouts in the other. 'Ruins and scenery,' they tell you. I like stucco and pantomime scenes. Besides, they always fry so villanously in those hot places; glad to get away from the fire, perhaps. When anybody talks of the Acropolis and the Alhambra, I always smell oil and garlic, and feel myself starving in memory on a melon."

He glanced at his butterflies as he chattered, and saw that the pin was entering their souls like iron. He thrust it down a little deeper as Lady Chesterton asked, with a voice that, despite herself, *could* not be careless—

"Mr. Chandos will be long before he returns, then, I suppose?"

"Won't come back till next spring," assented Trevenna. "He'll winter in Paris; always does, as you know. Delicious hotel that is of his, by the way, in the Champs Elysées. Clarencieux isn't likely to see anything of him."

Which was the unkindest cut of all, seeing that Trevenna knew very well that the baroness had persuaded her husband to take a little estate near Clarencieux for

two years' shooting, on purpose that the Queen of the Lilies might conquer in the country if she failed in the town. The husband had grumbled because he could ill afford it. He was terribly poor; but he had been persuaded into it by the assurance from his wife of Chandos's admiration of his fair sister-in-law; and now Chandos was not going to Clarencieux!

"I've paid you off, my lady," thought Trevenna, finishing his ice. "You've found what it is to call me 'a vulgar little wretch who lives nobody knows where.'"

Not that Trevenna had any particular dislike to these two women, beyond his general dislike to all and any members of the aristocratic order; but as the boy feels no dislike to the cockchafer he spins on a string, but finds amusement in its pain, and therefore sticks a crooked pin through its poor humming body and puts it to pain accordingly, so Trevenna felt and did with all humanity.

Gilles de Retz enjoyed the physical convulsions of his victims; Trevenna, as became a more humoristic temper and a more refined age, enjoyed seeing the mental contortions of his.

And yet the fellow had his good points,—some very good points indeed. He had indomitable energy, perseverance, industry, patience, self-denial,—the greatest virtues in the Carlylese school, which deifies Work. Perhaps it would have been well if both Trevenna and that School had alike considered more the worth and meaning of the purpose, before they gave an apotheosis to the fact, of labour.

If the Lily Queen hoped for remembrance from her lost lover, she hoped for a well-nigh hopeless thing.

The kaleidoscope of Chandos's life changed so incessantly that it was rarely indeed any picture that had

been whirled past him retained the slightest claim on his memory. He was always seeing one that seemed better than the last. Partly this was traceable to his own temperament, but chiefly it was due to the avidity with which all his world catered for him.

Now, as the yacht swept on her gay way, there could be nothing more charming than that voyage through "isles of eternal summer" and through seas laughing in an endless sunlight. Pausing when he would, Italian cities on the fair sea-coast gave him amusement under their aisles of orange-boughs, blending fruit and blossom till golden globes and snowy flowers swayed together against the warm, bright brows of their rich Titian women. Becalmed on a sunny, silent noon, he could lie stretched at ease under the deck-tent, with all the perfumes of chestnut-woods, and myrtle-slopes, and citron-gardens wafted to him across the water, while ice-cold wines sparkled ready to his hand, and light laughter or melodious music whiled the hours away. Landing at his fancy, he would indolently watch the little grey aziola fly among the ivy-covered stones of the great Pan's broken altars, or the fire-flies gleam and glisten above a contadina's hair while she gathered in her harvest of the yellow gold of gourds. Sailing at night through silent, starlit leagues of sea, he would think a poet's thoughts in a charmed solitude, while the phosphor-light glistened under silvery vintage-moons, and the ceaseless swell of waves murmured through the night. Or, when lighter fancies took him, under the shade of leaning walnut-trees and red rocks crowned with Greek or Roman ruins, where, the vessel moored in some nestling bay, he wound the starry cyclamen in women's silken hair, and listened to their liquid voices laughing out soft Anacreontic songs

over grape-clusters that might have brought back upon the soil the gay, elastic feet of banished Dionysus.

He was not sated, he was not wearied; he was what thousands pass from their cradles to their graves without truly being for an hour: he was happy. Oh, golden science! too little thought of, too quickly abjured by men. That glorious power of *enjoyment*!—we trample it under foot as we press through the world, as the herds seeking herbage trample the violets unheeded.

The summer months passed swift with Chandos; by leisurely loitering, the yacht at length wound her pleasant way down to the Bosphorus, and dropped anchor there opposite his summer-palace above Stamboul,—a fairy-place, with its minarets rising above a wilderness of cactus and pomegranate, of roses and myrtle, with the boughs of lemon, and orange, and fig-trees topping the marble garden-walls, and the showers of lofty fountains flung cool and fresh under the deep shadows of cedar and cypress. Here, with a French troop of actors for the *bijou* theatre he had some years before annexed to the palace,—with a score or so of friends from Florence, Rome, and Naples, brilliant, indolent Italians, the very people for the place,—with sport, when he cared for it, in the wild deer and other large game of the interior,—with as complete a solitude when he wished, and as utter an absence of every memory of the world beyond, as though he were a Hafiz or Firdousi amidst the Eastern roses of a virgin earth,—here the autumn months passed by, and all the indolent repose and vivid colour he loved blended in his life were mingled to a marvel.

The very inconsistencies of his character made the charm of his existence; through them, turn by turn, he enjoyed the pleasures of all men, of all minds, and of all temperaments. He who walks straight along the beaten

road, turning neither to the right nor left, nor loitering by the way, will reach soonest his destination; but he enjoys the beauty of the earth the best who, having no fixed goal, no pressing end, leaves the highway for every fair nook and leafy resting-place that allures him, and lingers musing here and hastens laughing there. Consistency is excellent, and may be very noble; but the Greeks did not err when they called the wisest man the man who was "versatile." There is no such charm as "many-sidedness."

Chandos loved the East; he had lived much there, either at his summer-palace, or deeper in the heart of it towards Damascus; he liked, of a summer morning, to float down the soft grey Bosphorus water among the fragrant water-weeds, with the silver scales and prismatic hues of the gliding fish shining through green swathes of sea-grass or drooped bough of hanging gardens. He liked in the stillness of starry nights, when the first call to prayer echoed up from the valley below as the faint gleam of dawn pierced the distance, to sit alone upon the flat palace-roof and let his lonely thoughts "wander through eternity," as thus upon the house-top under the Asian stars, yonder afar in Palestine, the great poet-kings had thought, gazing on their Syrian skies, and on the hushed, dark, sleeping Syrian world, and musing on that *vanitas vanitatum* which has pursued all lives from theirs to ours. He loved the East, and he stayed there till the first hiss of the winter storms was curling the Marmoran waves and the first white blinding mists were rushing over the sea. Then he left that summer paradise, where more yet than anywhere he felt "how good is man's life—the mere living," and travelled quickly across the continent to Paris, and wintered there in all the utmost brilliance of its ceaseless gaieties.

He was one of the idols of Paris; its fashionable world welcomed him as one of its highest leaders, its artistic world as one of its truest friends, its literary world as one of its choicest chiefs, its feminine world as one of its proudest conquests. He was never more at home than in Paris, and Paris, from the Tuileries to the atelier, always delighted to honour him, always flocked to his *fêtes* as the most magnificent since those of Soubise and Lauraguais, quoted his *bon mots*, followed his fashions, painted him, sculptured him, courted him, made him its sovereign, and found the wit of Rivarol, the beauty of Richelieu, and the grace of Avaux, revived in this "bel Anglais aux cheveux dorés."

In this sparkling whirlpool of his Paris winter thought had little entrance, remembrance little chance; every hour had its own amusement, every moment its own seduction; *ennui* could not approach, "sad satiety" could not be known. Yet, despite it all, now and then upon him, in the glittering follies of a court masquerade or the soft shadows of some patrician coquette's boudoir, as in the star-lit silence of Turkish nights and under the Asiatic gloom of Lebanon cedars, a certain impatient depression, a certain vague passionate restlessness, came on him, new to his life, and bitter there.

It came thus, because for the first time he could not forget at his will, because for the first time a passion he repulsed pursued him.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### Clarencieux.

THE rare red deer herded in the great forests, and the herons plumed their silver wings in the waters, down at Clarencieux. Kestrels wheeled in the sunny skies, and the proud gerfalcon came there. The soft owls flitted

among the broken arches of the ruined Lady's Chapel; and teal and mallard crowded in the deep brown pools that lay so still and cool beneath the roofing of the leaves. It was a paradise for all living things of river, earth, and air; and it was beautiful enough for an Eden where it sloped down to the seas on the south-west coast, in a climate so tempered that the tall fuchsia-hedges grew wild as honeysuckle and the myrtles blossomed as though it were Sorrento. Covering leagues of country, stretching over miles of tawny beach, of red-ribbed rock, of glorious deer-forest, and of heath all golden with the gorse, Clarencieux was the great possession of a great House; and its castle bore the marks of Cromwell's petronels, gained when the Cavalier-lord of the Stuart times, Evelyn Chandos, Marquis of Clarencieux, had held it after Marston Moor till the Ironsides swore in their teeth that Satan fought there in the guise of that "Chandos with the golden hair,"—the "beautiful Belial," as they called him, when, with his long light locks floating, and his velvet and lace as gay as for a court-ball, he charged out on them in such fiery fashion that he with his troop of eighty (all that fire and sword had left him), drove six hundred steel-clad besiegers pell-mell, like sheep to the slaughter, down through his mighty woods and headlong to the sea. Raised in the days when the mediæval nobles were

"Building royallie  
Their mansions curiouslie  
With turrets and with towers,  
With halls and with bowres,  
Hanging about their walles  
Clothes of gold and palles,  
Arras of rich arraye,  
Fresh as flowers of Maye,"

Clarencieux, with its tall antique louver, its massive battlemented towers, its fretted pinnacles, its superb range

of Gothic windows, its foliated tracery, so marvellously delicate on such massive stonework, stood in all magnificence still, the master-work of centuries.

Between it and the great marble pile adjoining, of the newly-made Earl of Clydesmore, stretched a wide impassable gulf of difference, never to be bridged. Lilliesford had cost more than a million in erection, and Europe had been ransacked to adorn it; but the difference betwixt the two was as intense as that betwixt the bronze Perseus of Benvenuto and the ormolu statuette of a Pall Mall goldsmith, between rich old Rhenish glowing in an antique Venetian goblet and new Cliquot hissing in a mousseline glass, between paint and pearls and silken skirts gathered with gracious grace about a nobly-born court-beauty and tinsel flung with heavy hand and tawdry taste around a stage-queen uneasy in her robes and in her crown.

Lilliesford was very gorgeous; but Clarencieux alone was grand.

The setting sun was reddening all the antique painted panes of its innumerable lancet-windows; the deer were leaving their couches in the ferns to begin their nightly wanderings; the last light was shed on the bold curve of the coast rocks and the sea that stretched beyond; beneath the trees in the dense forest night was already come, as a carriage swept through the miles of avenue, and Chandos came back from the East to his home.

Though, in the wayward love of change which would make us weary to wander from eternal bliss itself if we enjoyed it with our present natures, he lived much abroad, now here and now there, he loved Clarencieux with a great and enduring love,—a love that might have almost been termed passionate, so constant was it, and so bound up with every grey stone and hoary tree. With him,



though hatred of pain made him sometimes seem heartless, and love of pleasure and carelessness of temper made him habitually *nonchalant*, the feelings were still strong, and were not sacrificed either to the intellect or the senses. He could feel, as he could enjoy, vividly; and the most vivid sentiment in his heart was the attachment to his birthplace, to his great hereditary possessions, not for their worth, their splendour, or their envied superiority, but from a fond and almost filial tenderness for all the venerable beauty of the noble place,—for the sound of its sea, for the width of its woodland, for the smile of its sunlight, for the memories of its past.

He leaned forward as the carriage drove swiftly through the great vales of oak and beech and elm, and looked at it in the glow of the cloudless spring-time sunset. Before him, in the distance, rose the front of the royal pile, all golden where the sun-rays glistened and lit its glass to flame, all dark where the ivy climbed to the height of the battlemented towers, and the rolling woods of the inland forests stretched upward on the hill-sides beyond, an endless stretch of dewy April leaf. "It is almost ungrateful ever to leave it," he thought. "There is nothing nobler abroad. I will live here more for the future."

And a vague, irrepressible melancholy, wholly unlike his temperament, stole on him, despite himself, as he looked at the home of his race,—fair as it was in the sunset warmth, sure as it was in his possession. The thought crossed him how, ere long, at most, he must look upon its loveliness no more, but lie among the dead leaders of his name, there yonder to the westward, where the silent graves told the vain story of their lifeless glories.

It was wellnigh the first time that the "*memento mori*" had ever crossed his gay unruffled years; nor did it linger with him long.

Ten minutes more, and he was within the immense circular and vaulted hall of Clarencieux, in its dim splendour of purple and gold, of Renaissance hues and Renaissance carvings, with the gleam of armour and the flash of Damascus blades from the walls, and with the flood of light pouring down the double flight of stairs that swept upward on either side of the far end. There was not such another hall as that of Clarencieux in the kingdom of England. At the time of the siege, Evelyn Chandos had marshalled and marched six hundred royalists at ease in it under the great banner that still hung there, the azure of the Chandos' colours, with their arms and their lost coronet, and their motto "*Tout est perdu, fors l'honneur*" brodered on its folds.

His descendant now, as he entered it and came into the scarlet glow of the vast oak-wood fire which burned there almost all the year, looked round it with the affectionate remembrance of the man who comes back to the place of his brightest childish memories. "I will not leave it so long again," he thought, once more, as he passed through the line of bowing servants.

Out of a doorway on the left, in the warmth and the light, and down the staircase, as he heard his host and patron's arrival, came Trevenna, mirthful and full of *bonhomie* as the brightness of the leaping fire whose ruddy gleams shone on his handsome white teeth and his pleasant smile of welcome.

"As your factor, steward, head-butler, head-secretary, head-trainer, minister of the finance, and master of the horse, let me welcome you home, monseigneur," he cried, as he took the hand Chandos held out to him. "London's in desperation at your absence. What a delicious winter you've had in Paris! Never got a bit tanned in the East, either. How *do* you keep your skin so fair?"

"By no cosmetic but cold water," laughed Chandos. "Charmed to see you, my dear Trevenna. No one makes me laugh so well even in Paris, except perhaps my exquisite Rahel. Why didn't you join me there?"

"Too busy," rejoined the other, shaking his head. He had had delightful quarters at Clarencieux through the winter, running up to town most weeks at his inclination, and asking men down for the pheasants, the coursing, and the deer-drives, till he was quite a popular and courted personage.

"What a Burleigh shake of the head! I should like to be told what your business is. Choosing cigars and gathering gossip?" laughed Chandos. "Well, you know you would have been welcome, had you come. I didn't want you in the East, because you see, my dear fellow, you are not precisely poetic, and I like things to harmonize; but Paris was scarcely itself without you. I thought of you every time I had your favourite ortolans *à la Princesse Mathilde* at the Maison Dorée."

"Ah, the little angels!" said Trevenna, lusciously recalling their spiced and succulent beauties. "Dubosc, even, never gets them *quite* right. I'd a long talk with him about it. I told him I thought they wanted a shade more lemon, and just to be stewed in the Chambertin long enough to get the aroma; but, like every artist, he's as obstinate as a pig, and won't take a hint."

"You might be a club-cook, Trevenna," laughed Chandos. "You would soon make a fortune. Any one here yet?"

"Only a few men; just a few to amuse you. I have taken infinite care in sending the invitations. There are good talkers and good listeners; there are two or three who hate one another,—that always makes 'em sparkle out of spite; and there is not a single one who talks

politics. You won't be bored for five minutes. They are all your favourite set. Prince Paul Corona, the Duc de Neuilly, and most of the ladies, come, I believe, to-morrow."

"Ah! Madame de la Vivarol comes also. She invited herself, and her *fourgons* are already crossing the Channel."

He said it with a little sigh. He would rather she had not been coming: chains, however silken and sweet, were unendurable to Chandos.

"And you could not say No, of course, to *la belle*. Did you ever say No, Chandos?"

"I think not: why should I? Yes is so much easier and so much more gracious. No floats you into endless trouble, but Yes pleases everybody."

"Yes is a deuced compromising little word, though," said Trevenna.

"It is better to be compromised than to be ungracious," said Chandos, with a lift of his eyebrows. "I will go and have a bath, and then tell them to bring me some coffee up, will you, please? I shall not show to-night; they will serve my dinner in the little Greuze room. I have a charming novel of Eugène de Meisédore's I promised him to read; and if you can leave the other men and come and tell me the news of the town, I shall be pleased to see you."

"All right," said Trevenna, as his host passed up one of the great staircases to his private rooms, a suite looking over the rose-gardens, and consisting of his bed-room, dressing-room, study, atelier, and a beautiful little oval cabinet chamber, called the Greuze room from its being chiefly hung with female portraits, and such bewitching pictures as "*La Cruche cassée*" by that artist, where Chandos dined by himself or with two or three of his choicest guests, when he was not in the mood for the society of the

fifty or sixty people who generally filled Clarencieux in the recesses and the shooting seasons. All these rooms opened one within another; and a dainty dinner from Dubosc's genius in the soft, deep hues of the Greuze chamber, with the violet curtains drawn, and the white wax-light shining on the fair female heads, was as pleasant an evening as could be needed.

"I must see poor Lulli; there is no welcome, after all, so true as his and as Beau Sire's," thought Chandos, after his coffee and his bath. "I suppose he is here; of course he is. I wish I could take him news of that lost Valeria." And, acting on the thought, he went to the musician's apartment.

He never sent for Lulli. The crippled infirmity of the artist made the traversing of the long corridors and galleries of Clarencieux very painful and tedious to him; and Chandos, who never put himself out of the way for a prince, invariably remembered the calamity of the Provençal. The chamber given to Lulli was much like that provided for him in Park Lane, containing everything that could assist or entertain him in his art; and, at the farther end, a single statue in Carrara marble,—a Cecilia, by Canova,—which gleamed white out of the unlighted gloom as Chandos entered noiselessly, unpreceded by any servant.

"Lulli, where are you?"

At the first sound of the only voice he loved, or had ever cause to love, the musician, where he sat bent in the twilight, lifted his head with a low, joyous cry, and came forward as quickly as his weak, bent limbs would let him,—a man who looked as though he had wandered, by some strange transplanting, out of the dim cells of a Paraclete, or the hushed antiquity of some mediæval city of Italy, from all his brethren who found their pale sad

lives only solaced by some great art-gift, and dreamt of things that they had never known in the monastic silence of a living grave.

His brown, wistful eyes, so deep, so wise, so dreamy, so spaniel-like in their faithful loyalty, grew brilliant; the transformation changed the weary listlessness of his face, that never failed to come there at sight of the man who had rescued him and to whom he owed all.

"Ah, Lulli," said Chandos, with caressing gentleness, "I wish you had been with me in the East. I have heard no music from all the singers of Europe that has power to charm me like yours. Do you think the voyage would have harmed you?"

"I must have seen strangers, monseigneur."

"Well, no strangers should have treated you otherwise than with courtesy and reverence in my presence," said Chandos, kindly. "I wish you could shake off this timidity, this great sensitiveness; they do your marvellous talent injustice with the world."

Lulli shook his head: he knew that even the shield of his friend's power could not ward off him the shafts that struck him home, the barbed arrows of contemptuous wonder, contemptuous loathing, or, worst of all, contemptuous pity.

"I would do all in the world to please *you*, monseigneur," he answered, sadly, "but I cannot change my nature. The little aziola loves the shade, and shrinks from noise and glare and all the ways of men; I am like it. You cannot make the aziola a bird for sunlight; you cannot make me as others are."

Chandos looked down on him with an almost tender compassion. To him, whose years were so rich in every pleasure and every delight that men can enjoy, the loneliness and pain of Lulli's life, divorced from all the living

world, made it a marvel profoundly melancholy, profoundly formed to claim the utmost gentleness and sympathy.

"I would not have you as others are, Lulli," he said, softly. "If in all the selfishness and pleasures of our world there were not some here and there to give their lives to high thoughts and to unselfish things, as you give yours, we should soon, I fear, forget that such existed. But for such recluse devotion to an art as yours, the classics would have perished; without the cloister-penmen, the laws of science would never have broken the bondage of tradition."

Lulli looked up eagerly; then his head drooped again with the inexpressible weariness of that vain longing which "toils to reach the stars."

"Ah, what is the best that I reach?—the breath of the wind which passes, and sighs, and is heard no more."

The words were so utterly mournful that the shadow of their own sadness fell on Chandos as he listened. He sighed half restlessly.

"Is there any fame that becomes more than that with a few brief years? I do not know it."

Lulli's eyes turned unconsciously to the music-scroll that lay on the desk beside him, the score of passages grand and tempestuous as Beethoven's. "I do not want fame, if *they* might live," he murmured low to himself—too low to reach the ear of Chandos as he stood above him, who stooped nearer and laid his hand kindly on the musician's shoulder.

"Dear Lulli," he said, hesitatingly, "I tried to gain news for you of your Valeria whilst I was in Paris. I had inquiries made in Arles; but all was ineffectual."

Lulli lifted his eyes with that deep, dog-like gratitude which always touched Chandos wellnigh with pain.

"You never forget me, monseigneur. Take no more heed of her; she is dead to me."

"Hush! that is too harsh for *your* gentle creed, Lulli," said Chandos, whilst his hand still lay caressingly on the Provençal's shoulder. "I abhor those bitter, brutal Hebrew codes. Wait till at least you know her story."

"There is no need to wait; it is dishonour."

Out of the dreaming softness of his eyes new fire flashed, and on the frail delicacy of his face a sternness set. Never yet was there a recluse who had tolerance; and the honour of his genius-dowered name was as dear to the beggared artist as to the haughtiest royal line.

"As the world's prejudices hold," said Chandos. "There is more real dishonour in the woman who gives herself to a base marriage for its gold, than in the one who gives herself to calumny for a generous love. And it may be that Valeria——"

"Monseigneur, I pray you, speak of her no more. I have said she is dead to me."

There was so intense a suffering in the words that Chandos forbore to press the wound still so keenly nerved, still so fresh to every touch, although two years had passed by since the loss of the young Provençal girl from Arles.

"Then think of her no more, Guido," he said, kindly. "I cannot bear that you should have anything to grieve you. Life is too short to spend its hours in sorrow. And now, how is it with the *Ariadne in Naxos*? It must have progressed far, while I have been away."

He had recalled Lulli to a theme even dearer than Valeria had ever been. The *Ariadne* was an opera on whose composition he was lavishing all his love, his time, his luxuriant fancy, and his singular talents. Chandos himself had written for it the Italian libretto, and had lent all his knowledge of music towards its perfecting; it was yet scarcely finished, but it was to be produced under



his own auspices and at his own expense. It would be the touchstone of Lulli's powers and success, the *fiat lux* which would either consign him amidst that circle of the lost, those dwellers in the Antenora of dead hopes, who had it in them to be great and failed, or would place him amidst the names of his idolatry, Gluck, Handel, Mendelssohn, Rossini, Mozart.

They lingered over it. Chandos heard some portions new to him, and read the score of others, giving it thought and care and interest for a twofold reason,—for its own beauty as an opera, and for the hopes which Lulli centred in it; then, leaving the musician to the solitude he prized, he went back to his Greuze cabinet for dinner.

After that little *chef-d'œuvre* of the genius of Dubosc, Chandos stood leaning against the mantelpiece, glancing through his Paris friend's novel. The warmth of the logs on the silver andirons was behind him, the violet velvet and the glow of the painted chamber around, and the light fell full on the amused smile on his lips, the beauty of his face, and the easy, indolent grace of his resting attitude, as Trevenna drew back the *portière* and entered. He looked at his host with that acrid envy which never was stilled in him, the petty, evil envy of a woman, for every elegance of form, for every magnificence of manhood, unpossessed by himself and inherited by the man he watched. Yet he consoled himself, looking on that pleasant repose in the picture-cabinet, that unconscious half-smile over the witticisms of the French pages.

"Very well! very well, my *grand seigneur!*" thought Trevenna. "Smile away in Clarencieux; you won't smile long."

And Trevenna, after playing the part of host in the banqueting-hall at dinner to the eight or ten men already staying in the house for the Easter recess, went forward

into the ruddy wood-fire light to eat another olive or two with his host, and amuse him with all the mirth and mischief of the town gathered in his absence, told as John Trevenna could only tell it, till its wit was as bright as Meisédore's novel, and its relish as piquant as the golden liqueurs.

"What a good fellow he is!" thought Chandos. "I am half afraid he would be too clever for the Commons; a decorous dulness is what passes best there, and a fellow is almost sooner pardoned for being a bore than for being brilliant. They think there is something so intensely respectable about mediocrity. But still he has so many qualities that might get his cleverness forgiven him, even there. He is a marvellously good man of business, a financier, I will warrant, such as has not sat on the Treasury Board, and he has an acumen that cannot be overrated. I will certainly get him into St. Stephen's: once in, he will make his own name."

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"Chandos," said the Duke of Crowndiamonds, in the stable-yard, two mornings later, when his Grace, with the rest of Chandos' London set, had come down to Clarendieux, "did you hear what that fellow of yours—your factor, your *protégé*, what is it?—has been doing while you were away?"

"I have no *protégés*, my dear Crown," said Chandos, wilfully failing to apprehend him. "I abhor the word."

"Well, you have the thing, at any rate. You know whom I mean,—that witty rascal Trevenna. Do you know what he's been about?"

"No. Spending his time to some purpose, I dare say, which may be more than can be said of us."

"Doing an abominably impudent thing, to my mind.

Been down somewhere by Darshampton (democratic place, you know), talking something or other out-and-out radical. Why, it was all in the papers!"

"Never read the papers," said Chandos, with a little shrug of his shoulders.

"Addressing the masses, you know, as they call it; coming out no end at an institute, or a what d'ye call 'em. Tell him, Jimmy," said Crowndiamonds, wearily, appealing to a certain fashionable hanger-on of his, who played the part in society of the duke's mnemonique.

"Working men's place at Darshampton,—all working men there," supplemented Jimmy, obediently. "Fellows that look awfully smutty, you know, and throw things they call clogs at you, if they cut up rough; though *why* they use women's clogs, I don't know. Trevenna been down there; asked to lecture; did lecture! Talked out-and-out liberalism,—all but Socialism, by Jove! Town wondered; thought it deuced odd; knew you couldn't like it; couldn't think what was his game."

Chandos listened surprised.

"Trevenna at Darshampton!"

"Ah, I knew you couldn't be aware of it," resumed Crowndiamonds. "Told them all so; knew you'd have interfered, if you had."

"Interfered! How so?"

"Why, forbidden it, you know, and all that, of course."

"Why? I have no more right to forbid Trevenna's actions than I have to forbid yours."

"Oh, hang it, Ernest, you don't mean that. The fellow belongs to you,—one of your people, quite; can't have any title to go dead against your political opinions."

"Never had a political opinion," said Chandos, with a shade of weariness at the mere idea, "wouldn't keep such a thing for worlds. There is nothing more annoying

to your acquaintance, or more destructive to your own nervous system."

"Then, the deuce, Chandos! you don't mean that you'd let that fellow go on talking radicalism all over the country without checking him, or calling him to order?" chorused the Duke, M. de Neuilly, Prince Paul, and the others in the stables, all of them strict monarchists, conservatives, and aristocrats.

Chandos laughed, but with a touch of impatience. "You talk as if Trevenna were my slave, instead of my friend! Call him to order! What do you mean? I may think what I like of his actions; but I have no shadow of right to interfere with them."

"What! not if you saw him joining a party that threatened the very preservation of your own property, the very existence of your own class?"

"Still less then. Self-interest is the last motive that could excuse an aggression on personal liberty."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the Duke, as though foreseeing the Deluge. "Then, if you put him into the Commons, as you intend, you will let him choose his own party, go his own ways, run as dead against all your interests and all your opinions, just as he pleases?"

"Certainly. Do you suppose I only sell my friendship to secure partisanship?"

"God knows what you *do* do!" cried Crowndiamonds, hopelessly. "All I do know is, that I should as soon have thought of seeing Clarencieux turned into a hospital as of hearing you defend radicalism!"

"My dear Crown," laughed Chandos, "I am not defending radicalism; I am defending the right of personal liberty. I may deeply regret the way Trevenna takes in the House; but I shall certainly have no business to control him there because superiorities of property might enable me to do

so. You say, 'You have bought him, therefore you have a right to coerce him;' I say, 'I have aided him, therefore I am bound never to make that accident a shackle to him.' The man who puts chains on another's limbs is only one shade worse than he who puts fetters on another's free thoughts and on another's free conscience. But, for mercy's sake, drop the subject: we are talking like moral essayists, and growing polemical and dull accordingly!"

Clarencieux was filled with guests on the carefully-chosen invitations of which Trevenna had spoken. He had the very social tactics that enabled him unerringly to mark out harmonizing tints and effective contrasts so as to make a charming whole. His plan was bold and daring, but it never failed: he always asked special enemies together, that they might sparkle the more for being ground against each other's faces, like two diamonds on a lapidary's revolving wheel; and under his directions the visitors that met at Chandos' house never were wearied, or wearied their host, for a single hour. Few houses can boast so much.

According to the seasons, they rode, drove, smoked, played baccarat or billiards, had drives of deer in the forest, and curées by torchlight, French vaudevilles and Italian operettas in the private theatre, spent the day each after his own fashion, free as air, met at dinner to have some novel amusement every evening, and were the envy and marvel of the county, the county being little wanted in, and generally shut out from, the exclusive gatherings of Clarencieux.

Yet, well amused as his guests kept him in the Easter recess, which fell very late in spring that year, Chandos had a certain restlessness he could not conquer, a certain dissatisfaction utterly unlike his nature: he could not forget the Queen of Lilies. Never before had a love

touched him that was unwelcome to him, never one that he had attempted to resist; love had been the most facile of all his pleasures, the most poetic but also the most changeful amusement of his life. For the first time he had to resist its passion, and the very effort riveted its influence. He had always forgotten easily and at will; now he could not so well command forgetfulness.

Now and then all the variety of entertainments that chased one on another failed to interest him, all the brilliance of his companions to suffice for him; the wit and beauty of the great ladies who adorned the drawing-rooms of Cheveley almost tired him; he was conscious of wanting what was absent. It was a phase of feeling very new to him, nor with the *nonchalance* and contentment of his temperament and the gaiety of his life could it have the rule over him always. But it was there, a dissatisfied passion, from which there was no chance of wholly escaping.

Moreover, recalling the soft glance of the Lily Queen, he wondered, with a touch of self-reproach, if she had really loved him. He knew many who had, nor was his conscience wholly free from self-accusation on their score or on hers.

The Countess de la Vivarol, radiant at Clarencieux, playing in *Figaro* to his *Almaviva*, riding a little Spanish mare that would have thrown any other woman, always enchanting, whether she talked of Faïence-ware or European imbroglio, lapdogs or protocols, fashions or mesmerisms, flattered herself that her rival the English Lily was wholly forgotten and deserted; but the keen little politician flattered herself in vain.

Trevenna, with his habitual sagacity, made no such mistake, but pronounced unerringly, in his own reflections, on the cause of his host's needing so much more

care to rivet his attention and so much more novelty to amuse him than usual. "If he meet her again, shall I let it go on?" thought that astute comptroller. "Yes; may as well. It will be another complication, as the diplomatists say. Nothing like fine scenic arrangements for a tragedy!"

"Reading some unintelligible score of your ancestors, Lulli?" asked Chandos, as, having wandered out alone one morning, taking the freedom himself that he left his guests, he came upon the musician lying in the sun beside the river that wound through the deer-park. The woodlands were in their first fresh leaf; the primroses, violets, anemones, and hyacinths made the moss a world of blossom; nothing was stirring except when a hare darted through the grasses, or a wild pigeon stooped down from a bough to drink or to bathe its pretty rosy feet among the dew. It was peaceful and lovely here in the heart of the vast deer-forest, with a gleam of the sea in the dim distance at the end of a long avenue of chestnut-trees. "How crabbed a scroll!" he went on, throwing himself down a moment on the thyme and grass. "The characters must baffle even you; the years that have yellowed the vellum have altered the fashion. Whose is it?"

"An old Elizabethan musician's," answered Lulli, as he looked up. "Yes; the years take all,—our youth, our work, our life, even our graves."

Something in his Provençal cadence gave a rhythm to his simplest speech; the words fell sadly on his listener's ear, though on the sensuous luxuriance of his own existence no shadow ever rested, no skeleton ever crouched.

"Yes; the years take all," he said, with a certain sadness on him. "How many unperfected resolves, unachieved careers, unaccomplished ambitions, immatured

discoveries, perish under the rapidity of time, as unripe fruits fall before their season! Bichât died at thirty-one:—if he had lived, his name would now have outshone Aristotle's."

"We live too little time to do anything even for the art we give our life to," murmured Lulli. "When we die, our work dies with us: our better self must perish with our bodies; the first change of fashion will sweep it into oblivion."

"Yet something may last of it," suggested Chandos, while his hand wandered among the blue bells of the curling hyacinths. "Because few save scholars read the '*Defensio Populi*' now, the work it did for free thought cannot die. None the less does the cathedral enrich Cologne because the name of the man who begot its beauty has passed unrecorded. None the less is the world aided by the effort of every true and daring mind because the thinker himself has been crushed down in the rush of unthinking crowds."

"No, if *it* could live!" murmured Lulli, softly, with a musing pain in the broken words. "But look! the scroll was as dear to its writer as his score to Beethoven,—the child of his love, cradled in his thoughts night and day, cherished as never mother cherished her first-born, beloved as wife or mistress, son or daughter, never were. Perhaps he denied himself much to give his time more to his labour; and when he died, lonely and in want, because he had pursued that for which men called him a dreamer, his latest thought was of the work which never could speak to others as it spoke to him, which he must die and leave, in anguish that none ever felt to sever from a human thing. Yet what remains of his love and his toil? It is gone, as a laugh or a sob dies off the ear, leaving no echo behind. His name signed here tells no-



thing to the men for whom he laboured, adds nothing to the art for which he lived. As it is with him, so will it be with me."

His voice, that had risen in sudden and untutored eloquence, sank suddenly into the sadness and the weariness of the man whose highest joy is but relief from pain; and in it was a keener pang still,—the grief of one who strives for what incessantly escapes him.

"Wait," said Chandos gently. "Are we sure that nothing lives of the music you mourn? It may live on the lips of the people, in those Old-World songs whose cause we cannot trace, yet which come sweet and fresh transmitted to every generation. How often we hear some nameless melody echo down a country-side! the singers cannot tell you whence it came; they only know their mothers sang it by their cradles, and they will sing it by their children's. But in the past the song had its birth in genius."

Guido Lulli bent his head.

"True: such an immortality were all-sufficient: we could well afford to have our names forgotten——"

"Our names will be infallibly forgotten unless we attach them to a great cause or to a great battle; nothing the world deifies so much as the men who feed it and the men who kill it. Paradox in appearance, but fact in reality;" cried a sharp, clear, metallic voice,—the voice to ring over a noisy assembly, but in no way the voice to suit a forest solitude,—as Trevenna dashed through the brushwood with a couple of terriers barking right and left at hares and pigeons. The musician shrank back instantly and irrepressibly, as a sensitive plant or a dianthus shrinks at a touch. "Halloo, *mon Prince!*" pursued Trevenna, cheerily. "You *are* a disciple of the dolce, and no mistake! Easiest lounging-chair in-doors and wild

thyme out; luxurious idleness really is a science in your hands. If ever you do die,—which I think highly doubtful, you are such a pet of Fortune!—the order of your decease will surely be to ‘die of a rose in aromatic pain.’ Nothing harsher could possibly suit you.”

“You antithesis of repose!” cried Chandos. “You will scare all my breeding game, frighten all my song-birds, and drive me to a new retreat.”

Trevenna laughed as he dashed himself down on a bed of hyacinths fit for Titania’s wedding-couch, that sent out their delicious fragrance, bowing their delicate bells under his weight: Trevenna weighed a good deal, though a small man. Chandos glanced at them.

“Wanton waste, Trevenna! You are the genius of destruction.”

“Well, destruction’s very pleasant,—of anybody else’s property. Everybody thinks so, though nobody says so.”

The man had a natural candour in him, with all his artifice of action. He hated hypocrisy with an oddly genuine hatred, seeing that he was as cool a liar as ever was born. It seemed as if, like Madame du Deffand, he wished to render virtue by his words the honour he robbed her of by his actions: for he talked truths sharply, and as often hit himself with them as other people.

“But why can you want to kill all those poor flowers for nothing?” asked Chandos, tossing him his cigar-case.

“For nothing! *Sac à papier!*—is it for nothing when I lie at my ease? To be comfortable is your first requisite of life. Cæsar killed men by millions to lie at *his* ease on purples; why mayn’t I kill flowers by millions to lie at mine on hyacinths? Flowers, too! A lot of weeds.”

“Oh, Peter Bell the Second!” cried Chandos, shrugging his shoulders.

"A primrose on the river's brim  
A yellow primrose was to him,  
And it was nothing more,"

quoted Trevenna. "Now, what the deuce more should it be? How that unhappy fellow has been abused for not being able to see a thing as it wasn't,—always the thing for which poets howl at sane men! Why are he and I required to rhapsodize our hyacinths and primroses?—nice little flowers, one blue, t'other yellow, with a pleasant smell, but certainly nothing remarkable. What is this miraculous tongue that talks to your artists in a scrubby little bit of moss or a beggarly bunch of violets?"

"Grimm asked Diderot the same question. You would have wondered, like Grimm, what there could be to listen to from an ear of wheat and a little corn-flower."

"Certainly, Grim was very like me,—a regular gossip," responded Trevenna, pulling a handful of hyacinths and tossing them up in the air. "My dear weeds, you must die if I choose. Ah!—it's fun to have power over any thing great or small. Fouquier-Tinville enjoyed cutting off necks by a nod of his own; I understand that; *you* don't understand it, monseigneur. If we'd been in the Terror, you'd have gone to the guillotine with the point ruffles over your hands, and a mot on your lips, and a superb smile of disdainful pity for the mob: and I should have tossed up my red cap and spun round in the 'Ça ira,' and cheered the Samsons, and gone safe through it all. But good-bye; I'm going to your outlying farms. Did you know I was a first-rate agriculturist? Of course you don't; what do you know about any Bucolics, except the Virgilian?"

With which Trevenna, much too mercurial to sit still five minutes, went on his way, switching the grasses right and left, and with his two little terriers barking in furious chorus.

Lulli looked after him.

"You trust that person?"

"Entirely," answered Chandos, surprised.

"I would not."

"Indeed! And why?"

Over Lulli's face came the troubled, bewildered look which made those who noticed him cursorily think his brain was unsettled. He felt, but he could not define. To a mind only used to desultory dreamy thoughts, it was impossible to trace out its workings by logic.

"I cannot tell," he said, wearily: "but I would not trust him. The eyes are bright and clear, the face looks honest; yet there is craft somewhere. The dogs all slink from him; and the birds, that come to us, fly from him. He is your friend; but I do not think he bears you any love——"

He ceased, looking down, still with that bewildered pain, upon the clear brown river rushing, swollen and melodious, at his feet. Like a woman, he had intuition, but no power of argument. Chandos looked at him, astonished more at the words than he had been at the secluded dreamer's distaste towards the busy and trenchant man of the world.

"I hope you are wrong, Lulli," he said, gently. "*I* do not doubt you are. You and that gentleman can have little in common; but you are both valued friends to me——What is the matter?"

Lulli, as he gazed down into the water, had started, turned, and looked behind him into the great depths of shadow, where the trees grew so densely that even at noon it was twilight beneath their branches, which curled, and twined, and grew in ponderous growth, almost rather like a Mexican than an English forest.

"I heard Valeria's voice?" he said, hushed and breath-

lessly, while his glance wandered in restless longing hither and thither, like a listening deer's.

"Valeria's!" echoed Chandos, in amazement, as he rose to his feet. "You must be dreaming, Lulli."

The Provençal shook his head, and pointed eagerly towards the recesses of the woods.

"I heard it! Look; pray look."

Willing to humour him, yet satisfied that it could be but a delusion of the ear, common enough with such minds as Lulli's when one dearly loved has been lost, he went some little way into the deer-coverts glanced right and left, heard nothing except the cooing of wood-pigeons, the note of a missel-thrush, and the cry of a land-rail, and returned.

"It must have been imagination, Guido," he said, soothingly. "Some bird's song, perhaps, sounded like a human voice. There is no creature near."

"I heard it," said Lulli, very low to himself, while his head drooped, and his gaze fell again with the old weariness upon the ebb and flow of the river. He would never have contradicted a thing that Chandos had said, if he had died through it; but the superstitious and ignorant beliefs which the early training of a childhood spent in ultramontanist countries, joined to the deeply imaginative mind of a visionary whom no intercourse with a broader world than his own thoughts enlightened or controlled, had imbued him with, made him in his own heart turn rather to the wild and baseless fancy that the voice he believed he had heard was the supernatural sign of Valeria's death,—the farewell of her spirit released from earth. Lulli had been born amidst all the legendary mysticism and mediæval traditions of an almost Spanish Catholicism. The hues of it had coloured his mind too deeply ever to be wholly altered. It made his grandeur

as a musician; but equally it made his utter weakness as a man.

That night, when Chandos went to his own chambers from the smoking-room, the laughter of some of the men echoing pleasantly from the distant corridors as they bade each other good-night, he opened first the door of his atelier and went up to a Spanish picture hanging near his easel. It was a picture, without any master's name, that he had picked up in one of the dark, winding streets of Granada, pleased with its Murillo colouring, and yet more with its subject,—a young Granadine leaning from a moonlit balcony in the coquettish duty "*pelar la pava*." There was more of proud, melancholy grace than of coquetry in the noble, moonlit face; and it was strangely like the Queen of Lilies,—so like, that one of her first charms for him had been her resemblance to his favourite Spanish portrait. He stood and looked at it some moments.

"I must see her to-morrow again, come what will of it," he thought.

As he moved away, with all the unrest of an eager and repressed passion come tenfold on him with the knowledge of her presence near, his lamp shed its light full on a scarcely-finished painting of his own upon a rest; it was a soft and deep-hued oil-picture of the Amphitheatre of Arles, with a cloudless sky above, and the lustre of a Provence sunset pouring from the west. It had been sketched in Arles itself, two years before. As he glanced at it, a sudden recollection crossed him, a sudden thought sent a flush over his forehead, a pang of anxiety to his heart; he paused before the painting. "*She cannot be Lulli's Valeria?*" he said, half aloud. "*She never spoke of him; she never seemed to have had a living thing to care for except her own vain beauty. And*

yet she was an *Arlésienne*; she was of the age Valeria would be; she was very poor."

His memory travelled back to the past, far away, as it seemed, even by two years' space, and covered with a thousand other memories in his swift and brightly-coloured life,—travelled back to a time when he had loitered, in the vintage-month, in the old Roman city, passing on his way with the swallows to spend an Italian winter.

"I hope to Heaven not!" he thought, with a keener pang than he had ever before known. "Even a thing as worthless as she should have been sacred to me if that great heart of Lulli's had centred in her. They have never met; but it would be cruel work, for him and for me, to ask him. She was shameless before I saw her. It would be but worse anguish for him to find his lost Valeria in such as *Flora de l'Orme*."

And he went slowly out, leaving the darkness to fall over the Spanish portrait and the glow of the Provence sun.

## CHAPTER V.

### The Poem among the Violets.

THE portrait-gallery at Clarencieux was one of the noblest features of the whole castle. With its ceiling of cedar, its gold panels, its lofty arched windows, twenty in number, and its landscape beyond them of the home-park and hanging woods that stretched away to the sea, it would have been remarkable without its Vandykes, Holbeins, Lelys, Mignards, and Lawrences; with them, it was the idolatry of the virtuosi. Up and down it Trevenna, who certainly was no virtuoso, and could barely have told a Gainsborough from a Spagnaletto, sauntered the next morning, with his hands in his pockets, humming a *Chaumière* dance-tune, and reading his letters. He was very prudent, and did not trust the post with much of

his business; what was important he generally did *viva voce*, and the man would have been astute indeed who could ever have trapped him into anything that compromised him by the amount of a fourpenny bit. He had a very wholesome reluctance for signing his name, and any letters he ever wrote were of Spartan brevity. Yet this morning he had had a good many, and they all pleased him. Some were from the firm of Tindall & Co., written by Ignatius Mathias in Hebrew. Trevenna was a clever linguist, and had some half-dozen languages at his tongue's end, though he never confessed to knowing more than a very Anglicized, Palais-Royal, café-learnt French, which he would jabber villanously.

"Makes you look un-English to speak Parisian well," reflected this aspirant to be a representative of the British nation; and he would only let men find out by degrees even that he had a most scholarly culture in classics, making the concession for the sake of college-men's prejudices, though at Darshampton he would not have had the truth whispered for worlds that he could pen quite perfect Ciceronian Latin.

From Darshampton, too, a mighty manufacturing town, where faces might be grimy but heads were very clear, letters came that gratified him. He was beginning to be known there in their Unions and their Institutes,—talked of there as a rising man and as a rarely quick-witted one. He had felt his way there very cautiously; for he could not serve two masters, and be the Chicot of fashion and the Demosthenes of labour, very well, in a breath. Both his masters would have given him his *congé*. But he was equal to greater difficulties, even, than those of playing the part of *amuse* to his aristocratic patrons and that of pupil to his democratic inviters at the same time. He could make a club-lounger smile, and he could make a



north-country operative grin: and he had not much fear of ultimately turning both to his purpose. For Napoleon himself had never more intense volition, Robert Bruce himself never more patient perseverance, than this mercurial *flâneur* of Pall Mall.

He had come here to read his letters, because no one ever wandered in to the portrait-gallery save at such times as it was turned into a second ball-room, and, having finished them, he sauntered up and down, revolving their contents in his mind,—a mind into which nothing ever entered but to be fertilized to its widest extent. Just above him, as he reached the end, was an alcove in which hung alone one Kneller picture, answering at the other end a Vandyke Charles the First, as grand a picture as the Petworth, given to Evelyn Chandos by his king himself. The Kneller was the portrait of the last Marquis, who had joined the standard at Preston, and fought with Perth in the fatal wing at Culloden, breaking his sword at the prince's feet when the staff dissuaded him from a final charge for victory or death. The Marquis had been offered life and honours if he would have divulged certain Stuart secrets known to be in his hands, and, rejecting the offer with a calm disdain, had died on Tower Hill with his grand, mournful, *moqueur* smile on his lips to the last, and bowed his graceful head upon the block with the motto of his race, "*Tout est perdu, fors l'honneur.*"

Trait by trait, look for look, the Kneller portrait was reproduced in the features of his last descendant. The picture of the last Marquis might have been the likeness of the present Chandos. Trevenna looked up at it.

"Well, my lord," he murmured, a little aloud, in that innate loquacity which talked to inanimate things rather than not talk at all, "there you are, with your d—d proud smile, that he has got just like you to-day. So

you began life the most magnificent man of your time, and ended on Tower Hill? That sort of difference between the opening and the finale is rather characteristic of your race. Perhaps you'll see something like it again."

The calm eyes of the portrait seemed to glance downward with a serene disdain. Trevenna turned on his heel, singing a chanson of the Closerie, and only wheeling round when he came opposite a portrait of a man in the gold robes of Exchequer: it was that of the famous minister, Philip Chandos, who had died like Chatham. "*Ah, mon ministre!*" apostrophized Trevenna, "your son is a very brilliant personage; and yet

Lord Timon shall be left a naked gull,  
Who flashes now a phoenix.

You were a great man; but you and I shall be quits for all that."

At that moment the door opened. Chandos entered the gallery.

"What on earth are you doing here, Trevenna? I have looked for you everywhere. Are you turned connoisseur?"

Where he stood—under the Vandyke Stuart picture—in a velvet riding-dress, he looked so like the Kneller portrait of the last Marquis that even Trevenna almost started, though he was ready with his answer.

"I was reading my letters. This house is so full of people that the library is as bad as a club-room. The betting's quite steady in town on the colt——"

"Certain to be. I came to speak to you of a note I have had this morning, among others, from Sir Jasper Lyle. He tells me the state of his health will compel his retirement from the borough. He acquaints me with it first, but he will resign immediately; his disease is confirmed,—poor fellow! Now, as you know, the borough is

almost wholly at my disposal; to my nominee there will be no sort of opposition,—not because the people are not free to act, but because they are a quiet, thin population, who for generations have been used to receive their representative from my family——”

“Free and enlightened electors,” put in Trevenna, with a certain grim humour in the parenthesis; and yet his heart was beating quicker than it had ever beat. He divined what was coming.

“They have at least been better represented than metropolitan boroughs,” said Chandos, with a touch of annoyance. “We have never supported a mere puppet or a mere partisan. We have given the little town to the cleverest man we could find; and my father represented it himself, if I remember, for ten years or more. What I came to ask you was, will you like to be returned for it?”

Looking at him, he saw the eager and exultant light flash into Trevenna’s eyes, the sudden lightning-like up-leaping of a long-smouldering ambition. The daring, aspiring, indomitable nature of the man seemed instantaneously revealed before him, from under the surface of social gaieties and jaunty *bonhomie*.

“Like it!”

In that moment Trevenna felt too genuinely to have words ready to his facile lips. Political life had been the goal for which through years, when men would have called him a madman for such audacious follies, he had “scorned delight, and loved laborious days,” with its set purpose before him, none the less steadily stormed because the golden gates seemed hopeless adamant to force. Of late he had said to himself that come it would, come it should. But now that it did come,—the thin edge of the wedge which, once inserted, would open for him all

the gates of position and power,—the jester had no banter, the liar no lie.

"I thought you would," said Chandos, where they stood under the Stuart picture, with the proud eyes of the last Marquis gazing down on them from the far distance. "You are the very man for the Commons, and I should not be surprised if some day I come down to hear you unfold a Budget! Very well, then; we will put you into nomination immediately Sir Jasper's resignation is made known, and there is not a doubt of the result."

"But—would not you——" For once in his life, Trevenna was almost silent, almost agitated. The great prize of his life seemed to have fallen into his hands like a ripe fruit.

"I!" said Chandos, horrified. "Have you known me all this time only to ask such a question? They have begged me over and over again to stand for the town or the county, but I have always told them that if I must suffer for my sins I would prefer purgatory itself at once: I would rather be burnt than be bored! As for you, I really do believe you will enjoy serving on committees, going in for supply, darting in to save a count-out, and all the rest of it. So—it is a settled matter?"

"Really—on my life, Chandos, I cannot thank you enough." Even on Trevenna's face there came something of a flush of shame, and into his voice something of the husky hesitation of conscience-moved restlessness: for one moment the contrast of this man's actions and his own, struck him with a force that left him without his usual weapons. Chandos saw in this nothing beyond the reaction of a sudden and pleasurable surprise; he laid his hand kindly on the other's shoulder.

"Thank me by showing them in the House what my friend can prove himself! And, Trevenna, look here: do

not think that because you are returned through my influence you are for a moment expected to represent my opinions. The borough is a quiet, colourless, little place, that will ask you no questions provided you adequately attend to its sea-coast interests; you may do anything else that you like. I hear that you have lately been lecturing, or something, in the North,—that you have been expressing views totally different from those you hear in my set. Now understand, once for all, I wish you to enter public life *entirely* unshackled. Choose your party, or remain an independent member: act precisely as you deem most true and most wise. After living among us, I am not afraid you will join the Ultras in pulling our houses down over our heads and in parcelling our estates into building allotments; but, whatever you genuinely believe, let that be what you advocate in the House, as though neither I nor Clarencieux existed."

With these words he went out, to spare his presence to the man whom he had just assisted to the fruitage of his once hopeless ambition.

Trevenna stood still and silent, struck mute for the instant with the blaze of his rising fortunes, and moved for one fleeting second with a heavy sense of treacherous shame. "Damnation!" he said, in his teeth: "for five minutes I almost forgot to hate him!"

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Half in shadow, half in sunlight, in the noontide of the day, sat the Queen of Lilies.

A cluster of tall copper beeches stood out before a deep dark screen of crag, and waved and tossed together in grand confusion, and wild as they had been in the days of the Druids, only broken here and there by the rush of some tumbling torrent. Under the beeches was

a broken wishing-well, its stones covered with ivy, its brink overgrown with heaths and maiden-hair and countless violets. Here, some ten miles beyond Clarendieux, in this lonely forest-land of her brother-in-law's newly-taken shooting-place, Lady Valencia sat in solitude, with the falling of the waters only mingled with the thrill of a nightingale's evening note poured out on the hush of the noon. In her most sovereign moments she had never looked so lovely as now, in the complete negligence, abandonment, almost dejection, of her attitude. She leaned against the stone coping of the well, one arm resting on it, so that her hand, half unconsciously, played now and then with the green coils of leaves and grasses falling in the water; her head drooped slightly; there was sadness, almost melancholy, in the musing shadow of her liquid eyes. A volume of "Lucrece" lay at her feet; a water-spaniel waited near, wistfully watching for her notice. The melody of bird or river had no music on her ear: she was thinking very wearily.

Thus—she all insensible of his gaze—Chandos saw her.

He paused, checked his horse as he rode through a bridle-path hidden in foliage, wavered an instant, then flung the rein to his servant, bade him ride on, and went backward, through the entangled meshes of the leaves, towards the ruined wishing-well.

His step made no echo on the moss; unseen he noted the weariness of languor in the dreaming repose, the musing pain, that darkened the eyes that gazed down absently on the purple wealth of the violet buds. "Does she regret me?" he thought; and at sight of that living beauty which had haunted him through Eastern cities and Italian air, the old soft, wayward, unresisted passion which had so often ruled him, yet never reigned more utterly than it was near reigning now, woke in all its force.

He thought neither of penalty nor of consequence, of wisdom nor of future; he thought alone of her.

The movement of his hand as he put aside the red gold of the copper-beech leaves and the light spring buds of the young ivy-coils caught her ear; she lifted her eyes, and met the eloquence of his. She rose, with something almost hurried and tremulous in the dignity of her serene grace; her face flushed, her glance had a light in it he had never seen there; sudden surprise changed the calm of her grand and delicate beauty to a new warmth and hesitation that lent a still fairer life. In that instant, as he saw her under the burnished gold of the arching sunlit leaves, he could not doubt but that she loved him.

"You have returned?" The words were low and unstudied, as though in the surprise of his presence there her proud tranquillity broke down.

"Ah! forgive me that I ever wandered away. Forgetfulness did not go with me."

He scarcely thought, he never measured, what he said; he thought only of her loveliness, there in the shadows of the spring-time leafage; and the loveliness of women had always done with him what it would. He bent nearer to her, looking down into her eyes with a gaze that made them droop, and made her heart beat with a swift, uncertain throb, a vague gleam of hope. "My love! my love!" he murmured, thinking no more of the cost and issue of his words than he had thought when he had murmured such against the warm cheek of some young Eastern odalisque, or gazing into the lustre of Southern eyes under the Spanish stars, or by the shores of Procida, "we must not part again!"

The music of his voice stole upon her ear, charming and lulling her into its own trance of passion; the deep warmth of a hot flush stole over all her beauty, intensify-

ing every delicate hue, like the warmth from the noon through the crimson leaves; and as he drew her into his embrace, with his kiss he bartered his peace, his honour, and his future; for it, in that hour of her power, he would have thought the world well lost. The violets blossoming, dew-laden, at their feet—flower of the poets, and crown of child-Protus' golden hair—were not more sweet than that first birth and utterance of love.

## CHAPTER VI.

*The Poem as Women read it.*

BEFORE a fire (for she fancied or liked to say she was chilly, in those late April days that were well-nigh as warm as summer) Lady Chesterton lay sulkily reclining in her little boudoir. She was very sullen, very grave, very moody. She was bitter as gall in her own soul. The distant cousin she hated, because he had inherited her father's title, had been left a fortune that would enable him to raise the Ivors' peerage to its old glories, whilst her husband was so heavily in debt that the narrowest continental economy would not better him. This house with its shootings that had entailed so much expense, had served them no purpose. Lord Clydesmore was hopeless to attract again after his first repulse; other men were coy of her beautiful sister,—a Marquis's daughter, and portionless. She herself loved show, wealth, magnificence, all the exclusivism of greatness in its greatest; and she was literally poorer than one of the gamekeepers' wives out in the park yonder,—poorer, for the keeper's wife could accept her poverty, and the peeress had to go to court as a lady-in-waiting, and to rack her brains afterwards to stave off the milliner who sent her court-dresses.

"I wish I were one of those wretched women in the cottages in the woods!" she thought. "They have to



bake, and to scrub, and to slap their dirty children, and to pinch and screw, and live on pork and potatoes; but they are better off than I: they have nothing to *keep up!*”

It was a bitter truth, and she felt its bitterness to the utmost, where she sat, curled in the velvets and silks and luxury, that those she envied would have so envied “my lady,” could they have looked on her in her solitude. She turned her head slowly as the door opened, glanced up with half-closed eyes, then returned to the moody contemplation of the fire. She had been a very miserable companion, a very gloomy tyrant, to her sister during this winter, when they had been mewed in leafless woods for nothing, with no dinner-party nearer than fifteen miles, hearing of that “odious man Trevenna’s” men-parties at Clarencieux, and hopeless of ever seeing its lost lord return. Nor had the month or so of the town-season much improved her temper, now that she was back again for the recess.

Lady Valencia came up in silence till she stood before the fire; her black laces swept round her over a white morning dress, and there had caught across it, in unnoticed ornament, one of the long ivy-coils with leaves of darkest, buds of lightest, green.

“What a draught you bring in with you!” shivered Lady Chesterton, peevishly. “Good gracious! you are dressed as if it were summer. Take care, pray; you brush *Dragée’s* hair the wrong way!”

Moving her skirts from the little lion-dog, Lady Valencia stood silent still. Her sister looked up at her and wondered. The brilliance of the spring-tide seemed to have lingered on the Queen of Lilies; there was a new look upon her face.

“What has happened?” asked the peeress, sharply.

She looked down on the baroness with a certain

haughty contempt. She owed her sister many a goading irritation, many a sneering taunt.

"Your sacrifice at this shooting-box has not been in vain," she said, calmly detaching the green ivy-spray from her dress.

Lady Chesterton started up in her chair, her black eyes all vivid animation.

"Valencia! you do not mean——"

"Yes," said the Lily Queen, serenely still; but she turned her head with the lofty supremacy of a victorious queen; a proud triumph flashed in the velvet depths of her eyes; every line of her form, every curve of her lips, expressed conquest; "yes, we have won. I shall be mistress of Clarencieux!"

Had Chandos been there in that moment, he would have seen it were better for him that he should lie in his grave than that she should be so.

## CHAPTER VII.

In the Rose-Gardens.

CHANDOS, as it was, could scarcely have said that the same triumph remained with him.

For marriage he had an utter distaste,—of his liberty a surpassing love; the slightest bondage was unendurable to him; and the thought of what he had done on the spur of an irresistible beauty and a vainly-resisted love weighed on him curiously as he rode through the aisles of pines and over the vast undulating sward of the outlying lands, with the sound of the sea from the distance, and in the sunny air the winged dwellers of the beach, the delicate tern, the rare hen-harrier, the ring-plover, and the mallard, flying above the wild thyme and the still moor-pools. His life had not a shadow: why had he not left it as it was? He loved her,—he loved her with a great passion that,

through her beauty, swayed him like a reed; and yet a strange weariness, a strange depression, came upon him as he swept over the wild wolds. He felt as though he had surrendered up his future into bondage.

As he turned his horse into the home-woods, leaving the purple moorlands that were the sea-shore appanage of Clarencieux at a cross-road, one of his own hunters was spurred after him. Trevenna came up with him.

"How you do ride!" cried Trevenna, himself a good but cautious horseman, not caring very much for the saddle. "You will break your neck, surely, some day. How you took that gate! By the way, if you were to do such a thing, who is your heir? There is no other Chandos."

"The estates would go to the Castlemaine family: I have no nearer relatives," answered Chandos, a little wearily. Now, of all other times, he could have wished the incessant chatter of his Chicot far away.

"Ah, but you'll marry some time or other, of course."

Chandos gave a gesture of impatience: the word grated terribly on his ear. Trevenna glanced at him, and knew what he wanted. Through his reconnoitrer-glass he had seen the wishing-well, and the two who had stood beneath the copper beeches, and he wished to learn how far the affair had gone. The impatient gesture told him. He had studied every impulse and minutest trait of Chandos' character, till he could gauge his feeling and his meaning to the slightest shade.

"The ladies were upbraiding you loudly for your desertion when I left the house. They had sauntered down out of their rooms to ride and drive, and were indignant not to have their host *en proie*," he went on, carelessly; he knew his companion too well to press the other subject. "As for me, I have been meditating on my coming greatness. Really, have you thought well of it,

Chandos? Your friends will say you have put an adventurer in the House."

"They will not say so to me, and if they do to you, you can give them more than they send. Besides, you will have good company: did not they say so of Canning?"

"Then you are really resolved on lifting me to St. Stephen's?"

"Assuredly."

"Upon my word, monseigneur, you make one think of Timon's

*I could deal kingdoms to my friends,  
And ne'er be weary!"*

"Timon! you choose me an ominous parallel. Would you all be 'feast-won, fast-lost'?"

"The deuce! I dare say we should."

The answer was rough, but it was true as far as it went. There were times when Trevenna could not quite help being truthful. Lying invariably will become as weary work, sometimes, as telling truth becomes to most people; and there was a cynical candour in the fellow not always to be broken into training.

"I would trust you sooner not to be, Trevenna, for the frankness of that admission," said Chandos, right in his deduction, even if he should be wrong in this present instance. "Look at that glimpse of sea through the pines; how wonderful in colour!"

The deep blue of the sea-line glistened to violet beyond the dark-green boughs and the russet shafts of the pine-stems. The woods of the deer-forest stretched in rolling masses upward and inland; and beyond, tinged with the brightest light, stood the magnificent pile of the castle. Trevenna looked.

"Yes, very pretty."

"Good Heavens! you speak as if it were the transformation-scene of a ballet!"

"I like a ballet a good deal better. Clouds of transparent skirts are better than clouds of transparent mists. You are very fond of this place, Ernest!"

"It were odd if I were not. I can fancy how it was deadlier to the last Marquis than to sever from friend or mistress, when he had to look his last on Clarencieux."

Trevenna smiled, and flicked his horse thoughtfully between the ears, as they rode on in silence.

"Thou givest so long, Timon, I fear me  
Thou wilt give thyself away in paper, shortly,"

ran the thread of his musings.

Trevenna's momentary pang of conscience in the morning had been particularly short-lived. It had died with the next look upward to the face of the last Marquis.

At that moment, entering on the clearer spaces of the Home Park, where four avenues of gigantic limes crossed and met each other, one of the most singular beauties of Clarencieux, they encountered another riding-party escorting a little pony-carriage drawn by four perfect piebalds, and containing Madame de la Vivarol and a Russian princess. Among the escort were the Royal Duc de Neuilly, and another Duc, not royal, but an European notoriety all the same,—Philippe François, Duc d'Orvâle. Philippe d'Orvâle was a character,—Europe was given to saying, too, a very bad character.

Chief of one of the great feudal races of France, now growing fewer and fewer with every generation, he was, so to speak, born in the purples, and had lived in them up to the time when he was now some fifty years of age. Exceedingly handsome, he still preserved his *débonnaire* graces. Excessively talented, he could on occasion outwit a Metternich, a Talleyrand, or a Palmerston. Ex-

tremely popular, he was the prince of bon-vivants. With all this, Philippe d'Orvâle had achieved a reputation too closely allied to that of his namesake of D'Orléans not to be considered a thorough-going reprobate, and to care infinitely less for succeeding in the field of state-affairs and political triumphs than for succeeding in dancing a new Spanish cachucha, in brewing a new liqueur-punch at his *soupers à huis clos*, in dazzling Paris with some mad freak of exuberant nonsense, and in leading the Demi-Monde in all its wildest extravagances. He had a good deal in him of the madcap mixture that was in the character of the Emperor Maximilian, and, like him, scouted courts, titles, states, and dignities for some reckless piece of devil-may-care. He might have been anything he chose; but he, duke and peer of France, decorated with half the orders of Europe, descendant of nobles who had been cousins of Valois and nephews of Bourbon and Medici, did not choose to be anything except the chief of the Free Lances and the sovereign patron of singers and ballet-dancers.

Certes, he enjoyed himself, and looked on at his gay world unsated out of his careless eyes; but his family thought him mad, and had, indeed, tried to restrain him from the control of his vast properties, till Duc Philippe, suddenly taking it into his head to show them he was sane, went to Vienna, and conducted a delicate *imbroglio* so matchlessly for France that it was impossible to support the charge any longer, though, having so vindicated his sanity, he returned directly to his own courses, and was found at breakfast next day with three actresses from the Variétés, an inimitable buffo-singer from the Café Alcazar, a posture-dancer off the pavement of the Palais Royal, in whom he declared he had discovered a relative, and a Pifferaro's monkey seated solemnly in state in one

of the velvet chairs, munching truffles and praslins, amidst the chorus of Rossini's *Papalacci*, sung by the whole party and led by D'Orvâle himself.

A man who will set down a Barbary ape at his table, Europe, of course, will pronounce out of his senses: yet a more finished gentleman than Duc Philippe never bowed before a throne; and while Europe in a mass pronounced him the most hideous amalgamation of vices, two or three who knew him well, among whom was Chandos, steadily upheld that there was not an ounce of real evil in this bearded *bon enfant*.

John Trevenna, as far as dissipation went, was a perfectly irreproachable character, and had not really a vice that could be put down at his score; Philippe d'Orvâle was a very reproachable one, and had, beyond doubt, a good many; yet perhaps both Guido Lulli and Beau Sire were in the right when they shrank from the keen blue eyes of the one, and came up without fear, sure of a kindly word, under the sunny gaze of the other.

The next night there were, as commonly when the house was filled, theatricals at Clarencieux. The same Paris troupe which had gone to Constantinople were down here for the recess, reinforced by a new actress of the most enchanting talents, and by John Trevenna, who had the most inimitable powers of mimicry ever seen on a stage, and who now played in the first vaudeville, as an Englishman on his initiatory trip to Paris, till even the fastidious and sated audience he played for were in uncontrollable laughter, and even the ladies, his very worst foes, were of opinion that a person who could amuse them so well, certainly deserved to go into Parliament, though he did come nobody knew whence, and had lodgings in town nobody knew where.

Trevenna showed his wisdom in playing the part of

a Charles Mathews to this little bijou theatre, since by it he won over the toleration of his most inveterate and most inexorable foes.

The only guests, besides the people staying in the castle, were the Chestertons and Lady Valencia. A prouder moment even the Lily Queen had never wished for or dreamt of than when she first passed the threshold of Clarendieux into the mighty hall where Evelyn Chandos had marshalled his cavaliers, and knew that she was the future mistress of that royal place; than when she was met upon the great staircase as the Chandos only met their sovereigns, and knew that she was the betrothed wife of this brilliant darling of courts, this magnificent leader of fashion, whom the world had said no woman would ever so woo and so win.

Perhaps, indeed, as they passed from the reception-rooms to the dining-hall, and from the drawing-rooms again to the theatre, through the lofty corridors ceiled with cedar and hung with Renaissance decorations on which the first artists of Italy had of late years been employed, her glance too often wandered to the mere art-skill and costliness with which every yard of Clarendieux was filled,—to the priceless pictures, to the delicate statues, to the gold and the ivory, the malachite and the jasper, the porphyry and the marble, the collections of a princely wealth and of a race eight centuries old. Perhaps she looked too much at these, the mere possessions of accident, the mere symbols of power; perhaps the higher, deeper, softer, treasures of the future she had won escaped her, and were less dear to her than these insignia of her lover's rank, her lover's splendour: perhaps. She had been in the bitter school of titled poverty; from her birth upwards she had been so proud, and yet so penniless.

As they sat at dinner in the banqueting-hall, hung



with scarlet and gold, with its ceiling arched above the sixteen Corinthian pillars of porphyry given by La Grande Catherine to a Chandos who had been ambassador at her court, the Queen of Lilies, haughty as an empress, delicate as a young deer, pure and stately as the flower of her emblem though she was, appraised the grandeur of Clarencieux well-nigh with as critical a survey as Ignatius Mathias could have done, and looked less upward to where her lover sat, than opposite to where, above the sculptured marble of the mighty hearth, above the crossed standards of Evelyn Chandos and the last Marquis, of Edgehill and of Preston, there rested in a niche, all wrought in ivory and silver in a curious Florentine carving, the last coronet that had ever been worn by a Chandos,—the attaindered coronet of Clarencieux.

"Amazingly like the last Marquis he looks to-night, by Jove!" thought Trevenna, standing behind the curtain of the pretty stage before it drew up for the vaudeville, and surveying through a chink the slope of the theatre filled with arm-chairs, without any partition into boxes, and all glittering with arabesques and gilding and chandeliers, where in the centre Chandos stood leaning over Lady Valencia's chair. "Well, there is a Tower Hill waiting for him too! Only my lord, with his d—d proud smile, said, 'All's lost,—*except* honour!' I guess his descendant will say, 'All's lost,—*even* honour!' We must not strike till this election matter's over. That put me out of my calculations; and it's too good to lose. Only a little while longer, though, shall I play the fool to please his patricians, and monseigneur stand there owner of Clarencieux. *Après*——"

The bell rang a little chime; the curtain, exquisitely painted with a view of Pæstum, drew up. Trevenna sauntered forward to greet the Parisienne actress, with a

flow of inimitable nonsense, and an effervescence of animal spirits so mirthful and contagious that the most *blasé* of his audience were laughed into an irresistible good humour; and had his election depended on their votes, he would have been safe into his borough that instant. There were only two who, while they laughed, would have withheld their suffrage; they were the Duke of Castlemaine and Philippe Duc d'Orvâle,—the two who, despite the presence of women whose fair eyes had vowed him such soft fidelity, were the two in Clarencieux that night who loved Chandos the best.

Some faint perception that the tenderness borne him by the one he last wooed was not that with which he, with the fervour of an impassioned nature beneath his carelessness, had loved and been loved under Southern and Asiatic suns, stirred in him even that night. He had been hurried by her beauty into the utterance of a long-resisted passion; but of her heart, of her nature, of her thoughts, he knew nothing. He loved her as poets love, seeing her through the glories of his own imaginings; but he knew no more whether in truth she answered them than he knew what he had done for his own future when he had drawn her into its life with that caress which left him bound to her.

He had been spoiled by a world that had so long adored him; he had been used to the utmost gratification of every fancy, of every wish; he had been intensely loved by women, used to burning words, to lavish tenderness. In her there was some want that he vaguely missed, some coldness scarcely felt, yet ever there, which now in the first moment of his surrender to her passed over him with a chill. He knew that he had done a fatal thing; and the thought haunted him even in the gaities of Clarencieux,—even when for an instant he was alone

with her, as he drew her from the ball-room into the conservatories, aisles of tropical blossom and vegetation glowing with the deep bronze of South American leaves and the scarlet of Oriental fruits and flowers, the foliage of Mexico and the flora of Persia.

"Ah, my Queen of Lilies!" he murmured, passionately, "you are fair as the flower they call you after; but are you as cold? You have not yet learnt what love really is: look into my eyes and read it there!"

She drew herself softly from his embrace, startled and flushed by the warmth of his words, by the ardour of a temperament beside which her own was as ice to the sirocco, as the moon to the sun.

"Where is it that I fail?" she whispered; "how would you have me love you?"

"How! My fairest, words are but cold interpreters; if you knew, you would not ask the question. How? Speech cannot teach that lore. I would be loved as I love,—so only!"

"Ernest, pardon me," said the Duke of Castlemaine, as late in that dawn he met his grandson, both on their way to the smoking-room; "but your attentions were extraordinarily marked to Lady Valencia St. Albans to-night,—almost too much so, since there are princesses of the French and Russian blood in your house. If I were not sure——"

"Dear Duke, be sure of nothing."

His Grace paused, wheeled round, and stared at him.

"Chandos! you cannot mean——"

"Yes; I mean what you are thinking of. I have said more than I can unsay. Let us drop the subject."

An oath of the hot Regency days of his early manhood broke from under the white cavalry moustaches of the old nobleman, as he stood and gazed at his favourite

descendant in the silvery light from the candelabra above their heads in the corridor. He had no need to ask more questions; he understood well enough, and the comprehension cut him to the heart.

"Good God, Ernest!" and there was an accent of genuine grief, as well as of amaze. "And you might have wedded royal women,—Louise d'Albe, Marie of August, the Princess d'Orvieto! you might have claimed the hand of any one of them! but you declared that you hated marriage."

"I declared only the truth. Marriage I abhor; but her—I love."

The Duke ground his still strong handsome teeth with a fierce impatience; he knew that the Chandos of Clarendieux—libertines perhaps, epicureans always—had never let any earthly wisdom or law or plea stand between them and the follies of their hearts or passions.

"I knew she would do it, if she had the chance," he muttered. "To run after you here, to come into the country the instant you returned from Paris,—indelicate, indecent!"

Chandos stretched out his hand.

"Hush, sir: *I* cannot hear such accusations. It was not her doing that she came; she has told me that she was strongly averse to it, the more averse because, as I may now confess for her, she loved me."

The Duke swept his hand over his snowy moustaches with a scornful, wrathful gesture.

"Need she have come, then? The daughter of Ivors can scarce be so utterly destitute of friends. She intrigues for you as markedly as any Flora de l'Orme, though in a different fashion."

Chandos turned to him, grave almost to weariness for the moment, but gentle as of old.

"My dear Duke, you know that I would not have a difference with *you* for the worth of Clarencieux; but you must not use such words in my presence of one whom you will hereafter receive as—my wife."

He paused before the last two syllables; he could not utter them without some pain, without some distrust. His Grace suppressed a deadlier oath; he loved Chandos with more fondness than he would have cared to confess, and he had, besides, the most superb instincts of thoroughbred courtesy.

"I beg your pardon," he said, with a bend of his stately head. "I have, of course, no right to comment on your choice or on your actions; but all I would ask you is, what will she recompense you for all you must forfeit for her?"

Chandos gave a half-impatient sigh, not so low but that it caught his grandfather's ear.

"It is useless speaking. It is not that I doubt your wisdom, or dispute your right of counsel; but what is done is done: let us leave a fruitless subject."

He moved on, and threw open the door of the smoking-room. The Duke loved him too well to say more, but he turned back abruptly, bade him good-night, and went to his own apartment. Well as the gallant old man enjoyed the society of a younger generation, and welcome as he was to it by right of his grand intellect, his unquenched spirits, and his high renown, he had not the heart for it now; he felt, vaguely and bitterly, that the cloudless sunshine of fortune would soon or late desert the last Chandos left to Clarencieux.

Chandos himself that night smoked his favourite rose-water *narghilé* in the smoking-room, then sat down with Philippe d'Orvâle to *écarté*, closely contested, costly, and washed, now and then, with iced sherbet. They played

while everybody else slept; then, as d'Orvåle went to bed, Chandos instead let himself out by a side door that opened into the rose-gardens, and walked alone into the sunny, silent morning, with no other companion than Beau Sire.

With the temper of a voluptuary and the habits of a man of the world, there was blent in him as strong a love of nature and of all the beauty of forest and moorland, of the change of the seasons, and of the floating glories of the clouds, as the purest of the Lakists ever felt. In truth, he was many men in one, and to the apparent inconsistency it produced in his character were due both the versatility of his talents and the scope of his sympathies. His penetration was often at fault; he thought too well of men, and judged them too carelessly; but his sympathies were invariably catholic and true; he understood what others felt with an unerring surety of perception,—a quality that invariably begets attachment, a quality that, in its highest development produces genius.

He walked far, spending two hours in the forest and on the shore. The flight of a flock of sea-swallows, the toss of the surf on the yellow sands, the rolling-in of the great curled waves, the morning life of the woodlands, the nest-song of the thrushes, the poise of a blue-warbler above a river-plant, the circling sweep of an osprey in the air, all had their charm to him; not one of the sights and sounds of the spring-day was indifferent to him or unnoted by him. He loved to lay high prices on the cards in the excitement of a gaming-room, and he loved to lead the wit and wildness of a sparkling, reckless Paris night; but none the less did he love to stand and look over the gray, calm expanse of a limitless sea, none the less did he love to listen to the laugh of a west wind through the endless aisles of a forest.

He strolled till past noon through his lands with the

retriever alone beside him, then he re-entered the gardens by the same gate by which he had left them. In them he met, alone also, La Vivarol. He would very willingly have avoided the meeting. He knew how inexorable a tyrant the fair countess had been: it was with difficulty that he had loosened her fetters at all, and the escape he had made had, as he was well aware, never been pardoned him. Of a scene, of anything approaching reproaches, recrimination, or a quarrel, Chandos had more than the common horror; it was one of the frailties of his nature to do any thing on the face of the earth to avoid a "*mauvais quart d'heure*;" and now his conscience told him that he could scarcely complain if he had to endure one, even if madame were unaware of the lengths to which her rival's triumph extended. He advanced, therefore, with a misgiving.

"Ah, madame; good morning. It is very rarely you honour the outer world so early."

The Countess laughed as silvery a peal as that rung by her toy-dog's little bells.

"No, indeed. The dawn, and the dew, and all the rest of it are charming in eclogues and pastorals, but in real life they are—a little damp! but to-day I did not sleep very well; my novel was dull, and the gardens looked tempting."

"Those who are so much the gainers by it will not quarrel with any caprice that brings them to you earlier."

La Vivarol laughed again,—a little contemptuously, letting an echo of sadness steal into it. This brightest Venus Victrix was very chary of her sighs, but on very rare occasions she could be mournful with an effect no other ever approached.

"My favourite rose-gardens," she said, glancing round

them. "Their summer beauty is not yet come, though it is very near. *I* shall never see it."

"Madame! what can make you utter so cruel a prediction for Clarencieux?"

She let her long eyes, dazzling as a falcon's, rest on him, humid with a mist that he could almost have sworn was of tears.

"*Chut, mon ami!* A new queen will soon reign at Clarencieux, they say; can you pretend that *I* should be welcome then?"

There was a repressed melancholy in the tone more touching than spoken reproach. Like Trevenna, she had long studied and traced his most facile and most accessible weakness. She knew he could never be moved by recrimination; she knew he could be wounded in an instant by tenderness. He was silent a moment, startled and pained; he scarce could tell how to soothe away this bitterness to her.

"Believe me," he said, a little hurriedly, "whatever changes Clarencieux sees, you will ever be welcomed to it by me."

"And do you think that with these 'changes' *I* would come to it?" She spoke with a proud rebuke, a melancholy challenge, turning her eyes full on his. Not a woman living knew so well how to place a man in a wrong position, and close all gates of escape upon him, as Héloïse de la Vivarol. Chandos felt inconstant and cruel,—felt as she chose that he should feel.

"However that be," she murmured dreamily, placing him yet further and further at his disadvantage, as only a woman's tact can do, "*I* wish you every joy, Ernest, that earth can bring. Ernest! *I* may call you that still once more; the name will be for new lips in the future."

The tears shone, dimming her brilliant eyes; a touch-



ing and resigned reproach was in her tone; sadness was tenfold more intense, coming for once in its rarity upon the dazzling, victorious face of the sovereign conqueror. Chandos felt guilty, felt repentant, felt everything that she meant he should feel. His wiser judgment might have known that this was but the perfection of acting; but she did not let his judgment come a second into play; she moved him at once by his heart and by his sympathies. He took her hand, and stooped towards her.

"Héloïse, forgive me. I deeply regret—I did not know—at least, if ever——"

He was about, despite all his consummate tact and his knowledge of the world and of its women, to do so rash a thing as to apologise to her for having deserted his allegiance! She stopped him softly.

"Say no more; the past is past. No one you have ever known will wish you happiness as I shall wish it. We are friends now, and ever will be. Another love usurps you: so be it. To me, at least, is left your friendship still. It is not too much to ask, Ernest?"

"Too much! It is yours for ever."

He spoke warmly, contrite, and surprised that she had loved him so well. She had never looked more lovely than in this sudden descent from her haughty and contemptuous gaiety of sovereign triumph to this mournful and wistful resignation. "I never thought that she had loved me *so*," he mused, surprised and moved, when he had left her. She had led him by his feelings, and he had neither the keenness nor the suspicion in him to doubt that she betrayed him. To Chandos it was far easier to think that he had done a woman of the world wrong by thinking her too heartless, than to credit that she wronged him by masking a bitter passion that she felt and assuming a gentle passion she did not feel. It

was true, she loved him,—in her reading of the word; but it was in such a reading that the night before, seeing her English rival's power, she had set her delicate teeth together, and sworn, in her heart,—

"I will have my vengeance! If it be twenty years hence, I will have my vengeance!"

And before twenty years she had it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

*The Watcher for the Fall of Ilion.*

"THEY tell me the Premier has pressed on you again the restoration of your title?"

The Queen of Lilies spoke, standing under those very palms, in her sister's town residence, under which she had stood when she had first spoken the name of Chandos.

"Yes, my dearest, he has done so."

"And you accept?"

"No; I decline."

"Decline! And why?"

"Why? For many matters. One, that what was robbed from us by the crown I will not take from the crown as a re-creation. The last Marquis laid his life down to preserve his honour. Athens would have given him a statue in her Altis; England, characteristically, gave him a block on Tower Hill. We have never condoned his judicial murder."

"Refuse the marquissate to gratify the manes of a be-headed ancestor! What quixotism!"

Chandos looked as he felt,—annoyed; he was used to be deferred to, and the women he had loved had been playfully gentle even in their most imperious tyrannies. Besides, a deeper vexation smote him; this anxiety for his rank showed that his rank usurped her thoughts.

"Quixotism it may be; such as it is, it will always

govern me; and I should have hoped one who loved me would strive to understand my feelings, as I would strive to understand hers."

"But why? tell me why. Attaindered titles have been restored before now. Others have thought it very right."

"What others may do has never been my guide."

"I know! But—forgive me—I cannot see your motive."

"‘Forgive’ is no word between us, my worshipped one. But to tell you my motives I should have to tell you a long story. Suffice it, nothing—not even your prayer—would ever induce me to be made Lord Clarencieux."

"A story? Oh, you must tell it me!"

"Why, my dearest? We have a story of our own far sweeter than any chronicle."

"No, no. You have excited me now; you must gratify my curiosity."

She spoke caressingly, but in her heart were a keen irritation and mortification. She had set all the longing of her ambitious life upon his marquisate. The word of a woman is command to the man who loves her; he smiled, looking down upon her, and drawing her nearer in his embrace.

"You know the life and the death of the last lord?—it is a matter of history. When he joined Charles Edward at Preston, he was the most brilliant man of his time, a wit, a soldier, a poet, a *bel esprit*, the friend of Philippe d'Orléans and Richelieu, the courtliest noble of his age. He had loved many; but he loved latest, and above all, a Duke's daughter, his betrothed wife. When he was flung into the Tower they offered him not only life, but highest distinctions, if he would betray a state secret known to be in his possession. You are aware that he refused, in words which sent the Whig nobles who came to tempt him out of his presence like lashed hounds. Yet

existence was unutterably dear to him. What think you the woman who loved him did?—she, a court-beauty, whom hundreds urged to forgetfulness and infidelity. All she craved from the throne was permission to go to him in his captivity, being ‘prouder,’ as her letters phrase it, ‘to share his doom than to be one with the pomp and pride of emperors.’ It was granted, and she was wedded to him one evening in the Beauchamp Tower. She lived with him there four months, while his trial languished on. They feared to murder him, for the Chandos were very powerful then; yet they thirsted like wolves for the great chief’s blood. His name was like a clarion to all the gentlemen of the South. Through all those months she never left him for one hour, nor did one word ever escape her lips to urge him to purchase life at loss of honour. They took him from her side to the scaffold, one fair spring morning, to die, with a smile upon his lips, and those brief words, ‘Tout est perdu, fors l’honneur!’ They say that from the radiance of scarcely twenty years she changed to the blanched and decrepitude of extreme age in that hour of agony when the axe fell upon the neck her arms had wreathed in his last sleep. The son, to whom she gave birth afterwards, grew up to manhood, the estates saved for him by others’ intercession, —never by her own. She made him swear never to accept the restoration of his father’s title, since it would have been to give condonation to his father’s murderers. He kept his oath inviolate; and it has been passed on from generation to generation. Now you understand why I will not accept the gift of my attaindered peerage.”

The story had always had a strong and touching charm for women. Even Héloïse de la Vivarol, most careless, most heartless of young coquettes, had listened to it, looking at the Kneller portrait, with tears that

started genuine and true into her falcon eyes; and even her mother, the Princess Lucille, that weary, hardened, war-worn, continental Bohemian of the Blood, had heard it in a grave, awed silence, and had turned slowly away: "C'est bien beau!—cet amour qui est plus fort que la mort. Je ne le comprends pas; mais c'est beau!"

Now the chastely-trained English beauty, in the purity and freshness of her youth, was less moved by it, understood it less, than the calumny-proof and evilly-accused Frenchwoman.

She listened, she smiled, she thanked him; but the history did not reach her heart. She felt, moreover, that after what he had now said it would be as useless to urge him to the acceptance of the Clarendieux peerage as to urge on him some actual dishonour; and all the longing of her soul had been set upon that proud marquissate.

Meanwhile there was not a single person of Chandos' acquaintance to whom the prospect of his marriage was not bitterly unwelcome,—except, indeed, Trevenna, who seemed thoroughly content with it; at which other men wondered, knowing how much benefit accrued to him from the careless and gay extravagance of his friend's unwedded life. "But then," they remarked, "Trevenna's always such a good-natured fellow!"

He had thoroughly earned this character. Did any man want anything, from a cigar to a hunting-mount, from a seat down to Epsom to an invitation for the moors, Trevenna would get it for him with the most obliging good nature,—so obliging, that men never knew or noticed that the cigars were Chandos', that the mounts were out of his stud, that the drag came out of his stable-yard, and that the Highland shootings were over his heather and forest. Good nature Trevenna held a very safe and excellent reputation. His talents and his shrewdness secured

him from ever incurring that contempt, born of familiarity, which good nature is apt to beget; and it was a reputation, as he considered, that kept a clever man "dark," and secured him from every imputation of being "dangerous" or ambitious, better than any thing. No one ever suspects an embryo Drusus or Catiline, a lurking Gladstone or Bismarck, in the man of whom everybody says, "Most obliging fellow in the world; always do you a turn; uncommonly good-natured!"

When the blue-eyed, golden-haired Proconsul cracked his jests with Roscius, and lent his thousands of sesterces in reckless liberality, and offered his Cuman villa to his boon-comrades, and played the witty fool, with roses on his bright locks, through the hot nights of roystering, devil-may-care, dead-drunk Rome,—who feared or foresaw in the boon-companion the dread conqueror of Aphrodite's Temple, the great dictator of the Optimates, the iron-handed Retribution of the Marians?

"What ever possessed you to put that fellow into Parliament, Ernest?" asked the Duke of Castlemaine, in the window of White's, a fortnight after the recess, flinging down the paper, in which a quiet paragraph announced the retirement of Sir Jasper Lyle and the unopposed nomination and election in his stead of the nominee of Clarencieux, John Trevenna, now M.P.

Chandos raised his eyebrows a little.

"I put him in because he was fitted for it—not a common reason for elections, I admit."

The Duke gave a low growl in his white beard. "You think life is to be dealt with by *bon mots* and epigrams. I can't say the Lower House has much to thank you for in furnishing it with an adventurer!"

"It has much to thank me for in giving it a talker who can be logical without being long-winded, and sparkling

without being shallow,—though possibly it won't see the obligation. It reveres the prosy, and venerates the ponderous."

"And if you had a little of its tastes you would gain in safety what you would lose in brilliance. You set too much store on mere talent, Chandos."

"I err in an opposite extreme to most of my countrymen, then, Duke."

"*Can* you answer one without a repartee?" muttered his Grace, grandly wrathful at an election from which he had done his best to dissuade his favourite. Prevent it he could not; he had no local influence in his grandson's county, and the little sea-coast borough within twenty miles of Clarendieux had almost as feudal an attachment to the mere name of Chandos as his peasantry and tenantry on the estates. The days of the last Marquis were not so far back but that living men could remember their grand-sires relating the southern rallying round his standard; and the great fame of the late minister was a thing beloved and honoured through the whole of that sea-board as a thing of personal and imperishable renown.

"To put an adventurer like that fellow in the House!" muttered the Duke, fiercely recurring to a pinch of his fragrant *étrenne*. "I confess, I am astonished at you, Ernest."

"I would never have believed it," chorused his son, the Marquis of Deloraine.

"I did not believe it," echoed the Earl of Pontifex. "When I saw the paragraph in the paper, I set it down at once as a *canard*."

"Preposterous!" murmured a noble lord, who held the Foreign portfolio, from behind his morning paper.

"The ruin of the Constitution," sighed a colleague.

Chandos listened a little impatiently for his usual temper, and shrugged his shoulders ever so slightly.

"I am very sorry if the matter disturb you, but really I fail to see the occasion. I confess, it seems to me less damaging to put a man into the Lower House who has every promise for the vocation, except money, than to admit so many, as is now the custom, because money is the only recommendation they possess!"

With which concise retort on his and Trevenna's censors, Chandos absorbed himself in a new novel. The Duke, who might blame one whom he loved more dearly than any other of his kith and kin himself, but would never endure to hear him blamed elsewhere, laughed, and turned to the Foreign Secretary.

"Tell your rising men to look to their laurels, Pen-dragon: this fellow, now he *is* in, will cut some work out for them. 'Eh, sirrah, and ye're na quiet, I'll send ye to the five hundred kings in the Lower House: I'se warrant they'll tame ye,' said James the First to his restive charger. I don't think there will ever have been one of the 'five hundred kings' more likely to reign paramount, some way or other, than this very outsider, John Trevenna."

His Grace was a world-wise Nestor of all councils and battle-grounds, and, despite his aristocratic prejudices, judged the audacious outsider correctly.

The election had been conducted very quietly; there had not been the slightest attempt at even a threatened opposition; as Trevenna said himself, he "took a walk over."

Chandos was the idol of the whole country-side, and, for the sake of his great father's memory, no wish of his would have been opposed in his county. He proposed the new member in a few words which sent a thrill through all his elder auditors; for the voice was the same clear, rich, irresistible voice—essentially the voice of the orator—which they had used to hear as Philip Chandos. They had often wished and besought him to represent them in



person; but he knew his own character better than they knew it, and had invariably declined. Without any murmur they took the candidate he proposed to them. The only persons who could have opposed the Clarencieux nominee, on the score of the Conservative creed so long held by the Clarencieux house, namely, the few people in the borough who loved change or studied politics enough to be Whig (and they were very few), Trevenna himself had conciliated. That part of his canvassing he had done alone, unknown indeed to Chandos; and it was a study in itself, the masterly manner in which, abstaining from any avowal of Darshampton politics, such as would have startled out of their wits the old Tory burghers, whose only creed was the creed professed at Clarencieux, he still managed to dine his few Whig allies, to chat with them in inns, to smoke with them cheerily in their back parlours or their sombre "best rooms," to win them all over to a man, and to leave them with the profound conviction that he only coalesced with their opponents in order that he might ultimately advance and support their own opinions. Trevenna was a capital posture-dancer in social life, and here achieved the proverbially dangerous feat of sitting on two stools, with triumphant address and security.

Still, not here by his own tact, but by Chandos' assistance and friendship alone, did he accomplish the commencing ambition of his life, to pass unchallenged the door-keeper of St. Stephen's, and take his place upon the benches with the "five hundred kings."

Trevenna was in no sense an impressible man, and assuredly not an imaginative one; he would have strolled through the Birs Nimrud or the broken columns of Jupiter Ammon, with the sun full on the glories of the ruined temples, and would have cracked a ginger-beer bottle and wished for a *Punch*; he would have stood in St. Peter's in

the gloom of the Crucifixion-day, while the "Miserere" wailed through the hush and the twilight, and would have amused himself like a schoolboy with letting off a bunch of crackers undetected, to bang and sputter on the solemn silence; he was essentially a "realist," to use the jargon of the schools, and a very jovial realist too. Yet even he, little given to being touched or impressed as he was, felt a certain proud thrill run through him, a certain hushed earnestness fall for a moment on him, as he first walked down to the House and took his place in the assembly that John Eliot suffered for, and every tyranny since has feared.

As he seated himself in the Commons, men noted that he was unusually quiet; some thought that this town-gossip, this dinner-wit, this idler of the Park and clubs, was conscious of being out of his element, and felt his own superficial cleverness useless and frivolous in their great congress; one or two thought, noting the clear keenness of the eye, the meaning of the well-built brow, and the bright indomptable firmness of the lips, that he might be rather, on the contrary, measuring and maturing his strength against the future; and these were the deeper, surer-sighted of his observers.

So, quietly and unostentatiously, with good taste, as even those who begrudged him the elevation were constrained to admit, not altering his manner nor his mood because he had gained this social status, giving men no touch, as yet, of his quality and his power, training himself wisely, sedulously, and well, and caring little to be noted at present for any thing beyond his punctual and steady attendance at the House, Trevenna entered on his parliamentary career.

At the same time with his own, a very different ambition and aspiration were forwarded and fructified by Chandos.

The opera *Ariadne in Naxos* was completed, and after Easter, through his influence, and chiefly, indeed, at his expense, was to be produced with every magnificence in the presentation, and every assistance in the artists, that could be procured at any cost. On it hung the very life and soul of the musician Lulli. The idealic ambition of the French cripple was as intense in its absorption of him as Trevenna's realistic ambitions were of him; each was literally and equally governed by ambition, the difference was that one worshipped Art, the other only coveted Success. Lulli would have expired in rapture if, perishing in want and misery, he could have known that the world would treasure his works; Trevenna would not have given a rush for a fame that should have excelled Cæsar's, Aristides', or St. Paul's, if he had not dined well and drunk well while he lived.

Dreaming in his solitary room, the visionary, whose infirmities shut him out from every joy and hope that filled the lives of his fellow-men, had created things as glorious as ever issued from the thoughts of Mozart or of Meyerbeer. In self-reliance most helpless, among men weak as an ailing child, so ignorant of all worldly ways and wisdom that an infant of six years might have laughed him to scorn, Lulli in his own domain was a king, and from the twilight of the aching brain, which looked with so touching a pathos, with so bewildered a pain, out of the dreamy depths of his sad eyes, music had risen in its grandest incarnations, poems of eternal meaning had been garnered, beauty that would haunt a listening world and stir it from its sloth into a pang of some sublimer thought than daily toil for greed and gain, had been born in supreme perfection.

When will men learn to know that the power of genius, and the human shell in which it chanches to be

harboured, are as distinct as is the diamond from the quartz-bed in which they find it?

The *Ariadne* was the crown of Lulli's life; it was the first-born of his brain, the darling of his thoughts, the fruit of many a long summer day and winter night, given in untiring love to the work of its creation. By it the world was to decide whether this cripple's dream of fame was vain as "the desire of the moth for the star," or whether, when his existence had passed away from the patience and the pain of its daily being, the legacy he left would be upon the lips and in the hearts of thousands, with the legacies of the great masters.

The day approached at last for the trial,—scarcely three weeks since Chandos had bartered all the liberty of his future in one caress among the spring-wealth of the violets. Was it well lost? He thrust the question from him unanswered, and gave himself up to the sway of his new passion unresisting. He had never known sorrow; how could he well know fear? Now and then a passionate regret seized him for the fatal opportunity which had led him away to resign his fate and future to her; but—he loved; he had never been overtaken by calamity; he was of a nature on which presentiment could assume no hold; he flung the fear off him, and forgot it, stooping to take the soft touch of her lips.

"I suppose before long, Trevenna, you will renounce *my* exchequer-chancellorship and begin to prepare yourself for the nation's?" laughed Chandos, the evening before that on which the *Ariadne in Naxos* was to be presented. "I cannot hope to keep you as my financier now that you have parliamentary affairs in earnest to work at: still, you must give me notice when you mean to resign. The vacancy will be hard to fill."

Trevenna laughed also.

"I confess, I pity my successor, as far as finances go: though it is a very good office for perquisites, it is something tremendous for expenditure. By the way, have you any idea what you *do* spend, Chandos?"

Chandos carelessly shook together the diamonds on a fancy-dress as he made his toilette for a fancy-ball at the Princess Anna Mirafiora's.

"An idea of what I spend? No. I always tell you, knowing the price of things spoils them."

"But not knowing the price of them may chance to spoil *you*."

"I am spoilt. I don't deny it; but then it's very pleasant."

"Very, no doubt. I never tried it. But in sober seriousness, Ernest, do you guess what your expenses are?"

"'Sober seriousness!' What an invocation! Decidedly the House is disagreeing with you, Trevenna, and you are imbibing its professional dulness. Give the benches your estimates, please; don't try my patience with them. By the way, though, you are my finance-minister still: will you tell my lawyer to draw up Lady Valencia's settlements immediately, and see to the matter altogether yourself for me?"

"With pleasure. What instructions——?"

"That is just the point! Save my having to give any. I only give you one injunction," added Chandos, dropping his voice so that his attendants could not hear; "arrange them so that Lady Valencia can never feel she has not brought me a fortune as large as my own, and draw them up as you might have drawn them for a princess in her own right."

"As I should have done if you had followed the Duke's counsels. But, as for these settlements, I should

be glad of a little graver talk with you. Can you not stop half an hour?"

"I! I am fearfully late as it is; and I have promised Princess Anna to be in time for the Louis Quinze quadrille. Besides, I know what your graver talk means. My dear fellow, go in for supply, and attend committees, if such be your taste; but, for pity's sake, spare 'me legalities and finance. Settle what *they* wish upon her; I cannot give you a wider margin."

"Wide enough!" said Trevenna, grimly. "I wonder what would be left you if my Lady Chess filled it up! But that is not all, Chandos. Indeed——"

"Indeed, the 'all,' then, must wait for a better season," laughed Chandos, shaking the jewelled hilt of his rapier into its place: he was dressed as the Duc de Richelieu; while the Queen of Lilies would represent the Duchesse de Berry. "The princess would never speak to me again if I were to ruin her quadrille by my absence. Good-bye, my dear fellow; and don't learn gravity from St. Stephen's: I am sure you see a perpetual comedy *there*."

Trevenna looked at him as he swept out of the dressing-chamber, with the Clarencieux diamonds glittering at every point on the lace and embroidery, the black velvet and azure silk, the gold and the silver, of his dress of the Bourbon court.

"Go to your last night, monseigneur," he thought. "A week, and those diamonds will be for sale. You want settlements: well, you shall have them. The pear is ripe; it shall fall. Take a reprieve for to-night; nothing loses by anticipation. Ten years!—a long time. On my life, I feel rather like the watcher who looked out from his watch-tower through a whole decade to catch the first red light of the leaping flames. Ten years!—a long time; but Troy fell at last."

With which memory of the days of his school-desk hexameters, Trevenna drove on to the House, where he had already been in attendance from four to eight, and where there was a protracted though not important after-dinner debate.

Before he went to the body of the House, however, he turned a moment into the library, and wrote a little note, which he sent out to his groom to post.

It was addressed to Ignatius Mathias, and was condensed in one word:—

"Act."

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## BOOK THE THIRD.

### CHAPTER I.

"Spes et Fortuna Valet."

"COME early to-morrow," murmured the Queen of Lilies, as her lover led her to her carriage, lifting her fair eyes, lustrous as those of the daughter of D'Orléans she personated.

Chandos stooped his head, so that his voice in its soft answer only reached her ear.

"Would that to-morrow were here, or, rather, that now we did not part!"

If he had ever doubted that he was loved, he could not have doubted it now, as he watched the warmth that flushed her face, the light over which her lashes drooped, the half smile, half sigh, which with that divine blush replied to him.

The costume-ball had been magnificent as though it had been given in the Regency age it celebrated, and the Louis Quinze quadrille had been the most splendid of all

the square dances. The Richelieu dress excelled all others in the costly glitter of its grace; the Clarencieux diamonds outshone all others there. Royal women flattered him on "Lucrèce;" the greatest statesmen of the day pressed on him the restoration of his Marquisate; the world adored him as it had ever done, and feminine lips breathed him his most delicate and most dulcet incense. The night lived long in his memory. It was the last of his reign,—the last in which he loved the world and the world loved him.

It was late when the guests of the Italian princess left her imitation of the fêtes of Sceaux and of Versailles; the long line of carriage-lamps glittered far down to the right and left in the uncertain light of an early summer morning. Among the crowd a boy, of such beauty as belongs to the canvas of Spanish painters, stole noiselessly near, and, looking on, crouched, almost kneeling, in the shadow of the portico. One carriage rolled away; another, with the well-known white-and-silver liveries of Clarencieux, took its place; the name ran along the line of servants; the lad Agostino leaned eagerly forward. Down the steps of the entrance, under the awning, Chandos came,—the gaslight shed full on the rich colours and the gleaming jewels of his dress, as Richelieu himself might have come leaving the gatherings of the Palais Royal. So near leaned the boy that the gold and silk of the sword-knot touched his lifted forehead. The attendants ordered him sharply off the pavement. Chandos, struck by the look upon his face, so eager, so longing, so full of youth and misery, stopped them, and paused a moment.

"My poor boy," he said gently, "do you want anything with me? Surely I have seen your face before?"

Agostino gazed up at him, pale to the lips, and with an utter abject wretchedness in the darkness of his eyes.



He trembled violently. He would have given twenty years of his dawning life to have found courage for speech: yet, now that the opportunity so yearned and sought for came to him, the cowardice of his feminine nature held him paralysed.

"Speak. Do not be afraid," said Chandos, kindly. "If you want anything from me, say it without fear."

The boy's lips parted, but only inarticulate Spanish words halted upon them; the dread of his father's forbiddance, the horror of his English taskmaster's vengeance, held him powerless and speechless.

"That lad suffers; have him looked to," said Chandos, turning to the footmen nearest him. "What is your name?"

"Agostino Mathias."

The voice was husky and scarcely intelligible; a great terror—the terror of his tyrant—lay upon him; yet the strange sudden loyalty and love he had conceived for the English stranger, with the face like Guido Reni's golden-haired St. Michael, whom he had seen among the vine-fields of the Vega, looked upward longingly and piteously from his eyes.

"I shall remember," said Chandos, as he stooped nearer and put the sovereign or two that he had with him against the boy's closed hand. "Come to my house in the morning."

But Agostino shuddered from the touch of the gold, and shrank back against the stone of the portico.

"Not your money!—not *your* money!"

Chandos saw the gesture; he did not hear the murmured answer. He turned and dropped the pieces in the hand of the servant closest to him.

"That poor boy can be scarcely, I fear, in his right mind. See to him, will you?" he said, as he went down

the few remaining steps and entered his carriage, which stopped the way of others. Agostino looked after him with passionate wistfulness, while the great tears gathered and brimmed over in his eyes. The footman touched him on the shoulder and addressed him. Like one roused out of fever and lethargy, the lad started and looked round, then wrenched himself out of the hold the man had laid on him, and fled like a frightened deer down into the darkness of the street. The servant let him go, and slipped the sovereigns in his waistcoat-pocket.

"If a boy who calls himself Agostino Mathias come here to-morrow, receive him, and let me know," said Chandos to his maître d'hôtel, as he passed up the staircase of his own house.

The man bowed as he heard Chandos' command.

"I will be very careful he is admitted, sir. I beg your pardon, but Mr. Trevenna bade me tell you he is waiting."

"Mr. Trevenna? Why, it is past four o'clock. Is Clarendieux burnt down, that he comes here at such a time?"

"I believe he said, sir, his business was urgent: he entreated to see you."

"A very good fellow, a very clever fellow, but a man with one failing; he never knows when he is *de trop*," he mused, as he went on into his own chamber, that was library, atelier, smoking-room, and art-gallery, all in one. It was always ready lighted, and, without waiting to take off his Richelieu dress, he stood against the mantel-piece, striking a match for a cigarette, and thinking, as his hand caressed the eagerly-lifted head of the dog, Beau Sire, less of what Trevenna could need him for, than of how lovely the Daphne looked in the mellow gleam of the light.

"Who would care for life without Art and Pleasure?" he thought.

The handles of the double doors turned sharply; the massive fall of the blue velvet *contre-vent* was thrust hastily aside; Trevenna entered. Chandos looked up, and laughed.

"Adieu to peace! You can't open a door, Trevenna, without jarring a room. Is Clarencieux burnt, a racer dead, my Titians stolen? or, what is it?"

"I beg your pardon for disturbing you, my dear Chandos," returned the other, with more gravity than had ever been seen in him before; "but it is very imperative that I should talk to you."

"Talk away, then!" rejoined Chandos, with a sigh of ennui and resignation: "but, for Heaven's sake, shake off that most unusual and unbecoming solemnity. Who ever would have thought a single week of St. Stephen's would have been enough to make a man so prosy? Or perhaps its only training for future 'office,' is it?"

Trevenna was silent; he came and stood on the hearth-rug, with so rare and grave a seriousness upon him that he gave no light or humorous answer.

"Come," said Chandos, in some surprise and a little impatience; "silence is never your forte. Say what you have to say."

"Well, I'm a blunt man," answered his friend, as with some effort. "Plainly and briefly, I'm come on a disagreeable errand."

Chandos shrugged his shoulders.

"I'd a presentiment of that. People don't stay up for one on pleasant ones. *Après?*"

"*Après?*" said Trevenna, with something of his old malicious humour gleaming out in the corners of his mouth. "It is just the '*après*' that I'm come to talk

about. You've had a comet-like course, *mon prince*; did you ever speculate how comets end?"

Chandos looked at him in supreme astonishment: he almost thought, for the moment, that Trevenna's habitual sobriety had given way, and that some hot wines heated his fancies.

"My dear fellow," he said, with a touch of stronger impatience, "You must really pardon me, but if you only keep out of bed to propose me astronomical riddles, I must, with all courtesy, bid you good-night."

"Monseigneur, have a little patience. I come on grave matters, and you must hear them," said Trevenna, quietly. "You lock annoyances out with double doors in this chamber; but I fear, do what you will, they will ferret through and follow you at last. I asked you before you went to your fancy-ball, if you knew at what rate you have lived and are living; I ask you, now you have come back from it, the same thing."

"And I give you the same answer: I do not know."

"Shall I tell you?"

"If you please."

"I will, then; but wait one moment. You are perfectly happy, Chandos?"

Chandos looked at him again, in an astonishment not unmingled with amusement.

"I? Perfectly: I don't think I would live a day longer, if I were not."

Trevenna watched him as he spoke, leaning against the marble, with the deep glow of colour, the strewn treasures of art and wealth, the white grace of the statues, and the intense hues of the painted ceiling around and above. In the court costume, with the diamonds flashing through the lace and gold embroideries, the strong resemblance he bore to the last Marquis was as great as

though the dead man lived again. Trevenna watched him, recompensed at last for a long decade of patient tact, for a lifetime of bitter envy, of gnawing mortification, of impotent hate, of festering jealousy,—watched him as the jungle-cheetah watches his prey before the final spring. He went leisurely about his work: the treasured preparation of such long and thirsty toil was not to be devoured in an instant, but tasted slowly in its wicked sweetness, drop by drop.

"You would not live a day, if your fortunes altered? I am sorry to hear that; for the world, then, may lose you soon. We must take those pretty ivory-handled pistols out of sight: for, though you are so happy now, I fear you will not be so happy in the future."

Chandos rose from the easy indolence of his resting attitude, and looked at him, with a new light rising in his eyes,—a light of anger and of impatience very seldom there.

"Jesters are privileged proverbially," he said, coldly; "but there are limits to their allowance when their jests have no wit and much insolence. If you have anything to say, say it plainly, and make an end."

"*Très-cher*," replied Trevenna, with an irresistible lapse into his habitual manner, "that confounded hauteur of you thorough-breds is deuced provoking; it is, indeed; and people won't put up with it, perhaps, quite so patiently in future. As for saying plainly what I have to say, I suppose you will not believe me if I tell you that your expenditure is, and has been for many years, about quadruple what your income is?"

"My expenditure? Impossible!"

"Only too possible, unhappily. Royalties come expensive, *mon prince*; and who wears the purples must pay for them. You have no notion, you say, of all that you

have spent. What comes of a man's not knowing the rate at which he lives? Why, that, sooner or later, the last rope-strand gives way, and he is—ruined.”

The word fell strangely on the silence of that tranquil chamber, bringing, like the stroke of death, desolation where all was peace.

Yet still the word passed by him whom it should have warned; his confidence was too secure, his carelessness too entire, his possession of all that was highest and richest and brightest of too long custom, for the first presage of the storm to have power to force its meaning on him.

“Have you drunk too much, or are you mad? This sort of fooling passes all license. If you indeed know what you are saying, I must beg you to leave my presence.”

Trevenna, in answer, stood in a firmer, sturdier attitude, with his feet apart, and his arms folded like the Napoleonic statuettes.

“I am neither mad nor drunk, and I am not fooling. Briefly, Chandos, I must tell you what I have staved off perhaps too long; but I shrank from the task. I let time pass. I thought you might marry some rich or even royal bride, whose alliance would change the whole aspect; but your bidding me arrange the settlements for Lady Valencia compels me to withhold the truth no longer from you. There is nothing to settle on her!”

“Nothing to settle on her? What can you mean?”

“I mean what I say. There is not a sou's worth—not even those diamonds that glitter so bravely on your dainty dress—that is *free* to go to her dower. Can you not understand me when I tell you that you have lived at the rate of four times the amount of your annual income? What history does that simple fact suggest? You must be financier enough to know *that*? Hang it, Chandos!

I am not a deep-feeling man,—I don't go in for all that, as you know; but I wish from my soul that I could spare you, or that some other could better break to you the news you must hear to-night."

Chandos listened; a deadly pallor came on his face, his lips grew white, his heart almost ceased to beat; the first shadow of this dim horror stole on him. A glimpse of its meaning was forced at length upon him; he had heard of such fates for other men.

"If you speak truth, speak out," he said, in that strange and deadly calmness which falls upon the mind and senses before the visitation of some great calamity. A faint, vague sense of this evil approaching him was all he felt; it was not possible that it could come to him yet more fixedly or fully.

"I speak the sad and sober truth," returned Trevenna, far more quietly than he had ever spoken, his eyes still resting on the Daphne opposite, as though to guard against a tell-tale flash from them of that lustful exultation that he knew was in their glance. "I can't speak to you as coyly and as delicately as your patrician friends and relatives would do. I'm a plain, frank man, Chandos, and I've the very devil's own mischief-making to tell you of now: but, believe me once for all, it costs me almost as much to tell as it can do you to hear. There is no good in beating about the bush,—no good in being discursive over a thing so horrible as this; you must know the worst at once, and it is better, perhaps, told without varnish or veil; a short shrift and a quick death. That is truer mercy, after all, than all the endless preparation, your fellow-aristocrats might give you. Listen!——"

He paused a moment, as though that which he had to bring bore even him down in its bitter burden; but his eyes glanced swiftly and longingly at the man he tor-

tured: he loved this protracted torment. Like a cat, he played with his victim's misery before he killed him; and if without suspicion he could have prolonged it through hours of ignorance and dread, he would have done so with all the endless patience of hate.

"Listen," he said, more softly; "as I have said, you have long lived—indeed, I think since your majority—at the rate of four times your income. You have kept two households in England nearly such as princes keep; you have had your Paris hotel, your Turkish palace; you have lavished money on art, like another Beckford; you have spent God knows what on women; you have given entertainments that cost you a couple of thousand a night: you have played the patron to every starving genius you met: in a word, you have lived like a king, my dear Ernest, and not being a king, your royalty has broken down, and will, I fear, end in a very unavoidable abdication. In a word, you are in debt to an extent I hardly dare compute to you. To sell everything you possess will hardly satisfy your claimants; bill-discounters and money-lenders have your signature in their hands, and will call for payment without mercy. Briefly, you have sold your birthright for ten years' enjoyment, and you now are, beyond all hope of ransom, irrevocably and most utterly—*ruined*."

The word cut down again upon the stillness with a shrill, sharp, pitiless echo, as a sword cuts down through the air before it falls on the bowed neck of the doomed.

Its utterance repaid its speaker for all he had foregone, for all he had foreborne, for every slight endured in silence from the world he hated, for every benefit taken with an inward curse from the man he hunted down. He loved that word so well, he could have dinned it on the silence in incessant repetition, hurling down with it the



brilliant and gracious life he had so long envied from the thrones of pleasure and of power into the nethermost darkness of a hopeless desolation.

"Ruined? *I?*"

Chandos echoed the word as a man suddenly wakened from a deep, sweet sleep to learn some unutterable shame or misery that has befallen him, repeats the phrase that tells it, mechanically and without sense. The agony of horror that gathered, white and bewildered, on the gallant beauty of his face, was in as ghastly a contrast with the glittering splendour of his dress as though the face of a corpse gazed out from the laces and jewels of a gay masquerade.

"Yes; even you, my brilliant Lord of Clarencieux!" answered the friend who stood upon his hearth; and with the words went an irrepressible snarl and sneer of triumph and of mockery that passed him unnoted in that moment of breathless, burning, inconceivable anguish. "*Even* you! Details you will learn for yourself hereafter, for to-night the broad, brief fact's enough. I would have warned you long ago, if you would only have listened; but you know as well as I do you would never hear of business, never think of money. Besides, in truth, I scarcely thought it was so very, so hopelessly bad as it seems now to be. I suppose your marriage with a bride who has no dower has set the fellows on: they are hounding for their moneys now like mad. I have had hard work to keep them even from arresting you; I have, upon my honour! To-night, when you went out to your princess's ball with all those thousands of pounds' worth of rose-diamonds about you, it was a wonder, on my life, that some one of your hungry creditors didn't stop those dainty jewels. You shall see to-morrow that I tell you but the plain, unvarnished truth. You are so deeply involved now, Chandos, that I doubt

if there is a single little cabinet picture on these walls, or a single rood of land at your beloved Clarencieux, that in a month's time you will call your own——"

"Stop!—oh, my God! have some mercy!"

The words broke out like the last cry wrung from one driven to the extremity of physical endurance, — wrung from him in the abandonment of human misery against all strength of manhood and all power of will. He could bear no more, he was stunned and blinded like a man struck from behind him a murderous blow upon the brain which blasts his sight to darkness.

Ruin!—it had no meaning for him; it came to him like some dim, shapeless, devil-begotten thing that had no form or substance, a hideous lemur of a night's delirious dream.

Trevenna stood by and watched him; his hour had come at last, the hour which paid him back the cankerous evil, the relentless toil, the unremitting chase, of such long, wakeful, hungry years. This moment had been hoarded up by him as a miser hoards his gold, and now, in its full seizure, he was repaid for all his studied craft, for all his fondly-nursed revenge, for all his unrelinquished hatred, — repaid to the uttermost coin by every gasped breath that he counted, by every shiver of the voiceless anguish that he watched.

He did not heed the prayer for silence, but took up the broken thread of his discourse, and played with it as though loving it in every shape and on every side.

"Your property, you see, was fine, no doubt; but fine properties are not Monte-Christo caverns of exhaustless wealth. Dipped into, they will waste. You have eclipsed princes, and starred through all Europe; you pay now for the pre-eminence. You have had women's love,—no toy so costly! you have had the great world's worship,—no

clientela so expensive! you have been a dilettante, a *lion*, a leader of fashion, a man of endless pleasures,—no pursuits take so much gold! You have lived in such a style that you would have run through millions, had you had them; and you had not one million, though you had a noble inheritance. Of course you possess such quantities of pictures and statues, and all that kind of thing, and your estate itself is such an untouched mine, that there can be no fear of your personal liberty ever being endangered; but I am grievously afraid, I am indeed, that you will be obliged to give up almost everything,—give up even Clarencieux!"

The words, so deftly strung together to goad and taunt and add misery to misery, wound their pitiless speech, unchecked, with all the fiendish ingenuity of hatred that could not sate itself enough in the vastness of this wreck it wrought.

Chandos heard them, yet only dimly as men hear in whose ears the noise of great sea-waves is surging. He raised himself erect, rigid in an unnatural calm. Years of age and wretchedness could not have changed his face as this brief moment had changed it.

"You swear that this is truth?"

His voice was broken and strained, like the voice of a man just arisen from a bed of lengthened sickness.

"To the uttermost letter."

Chandos' head drooped as though he had been suddenly stabbed; all the vigour and grace and perfection of his frame seemed to wither and grow old; a shudder, such as the limbs shiver with involuntarily under some unendurable bodily torment of the flames or of the knife, shook him from head to foot.

As the flare of a torch suddenly shows the abyss that yawns beneath the traveller's feet, so the glare and the

shame of the sentence he heard showed him the bottomless desolation over which he stood. He was wakened from his dreamful ease to be flung face to face with an absolute despair. For the moment strength gave way, manhood was shattered down, consciousness itself could keep no hold on life; the lights of the chamber reeled in giddy gyrations round him, a sound like rushing waters beat in on his brain, a darkness like the darkness of death fell upon him. He swayed forward, like a drunken man, against the broad marble ledge above the hearth; his hands instinctively clenched on the stone as the hands of those sinking to their grave down the glassy slope of an Alpine mountain clench on the ice-ridge that they meet; his head sunk on his arms, the suffocated labour of each breath panted out on the silence like a death-spasm:—at one stroke he was bereaved of all!

His torturer looked on. Never in the cells of the Inquisition could Franciscan or Dominican have watched the gradual wrenching of the rack, the winding-out of the strained limbs till they broke, the wringing and bruising and slaying of the quivering nerves till they could bear no more, as Trevenna watched this moral torment, this assassination of joy and honour, peace and love and fame, and every fair thing of a gracious world, laid desert and desolate at his word. He looked on, as in the legends of the early Church devils looked on at the impotent despair of those whose souls they had lured and tempted and meshed in their net, and made their own. He looked on, and was repaid.

"Chandos," he said, gravely, almost softly, pouring the last drop of burning oil into the fresh wound his stab had dealt, "Chandos, believe me, — from my soul I *pity* you!"

He had studied long the nature of the man now in his power, and he knew the keenest sting to give.

This man *pitied* him! Chandos raised himself with sudden force; the pride of his race was not dead in him; and the same courage in the teeth of calamity, which had sent the last Marquis with a smile to the Tower scaffold, was in him now under the lash of his dependant's mockery of compassion. His face was strangely and terribly calm, but a premature age seemed to have withered all life from it; his lips were colourless, and on his forehead alone the dark congested blood flushed heavily, red and burning as in the heat of fever.

"If this *be* the truth, you have had little mercy in the telling! Go; take the town your story; it will startle them. Spare more of it to *me*!"

The words were spoken with a tranquillity more horrible than the fiercest outbreaks of delirium or the most hopeless abandonment of woe.

Trevenna moved slightly; he could not meet the gaze of those calm tearless eyes, from whose depths there looked so wide a world of unuttered reproach, of unuttered agony.

"Chandos, Chandos, there will be no need for *me* to tell the town; it will be whispered soon enough! Would you give the task to your debtor, your guest, your friend? No! There are too many who will take it fast enough. Leave it to the men you have outrivalled and the women you have forsaken; those are the glib tongues for such a theme! As for mercy in the telling, what mercy can the man show who has to bring his death-warrant to another? I would have warned you long ago, and you would not be warned. Is it my fault that you have wasted your princely substance and are a beggar now? Oh, my friend, there is no error in this thing save your own."

Chandos gave a forward gesture, like a maddened animal rising to its spring; he did not reel, or stagger, or let escape one sign of the anguish within him, but he stood there upon his desolated hearth, erect, brought to bay as the deer by the sleuth-hounds, livid to the lips, with only the blood burning like fire across his brow, his golden hair dashed back disordered, his eyes proud and fearless even in their misery. It was no longer Alcibiades amidst the gay levity, the dreamy languor, the fragrant rose-crowns, and the laurel-wreathed amphoræ of the revels of his youth; it was Alcibiades, grander in his fall than in his reign, facing alone the dead cold of the winter's night and the unsheathed circle of his assassins' steel, until they cowed and fell asunder and pierced him with dastard surety from afar off with the arrows of the Bactrian bows. He raised his right hand and pointed to the door.

"If you are man, not devil, let me be! Go! I command you! Go!"

Bold though they were, his torturer's eyes could not meet his; victorious though he was, Trevenna dared not dispute that bidding; insatiate though his greed for this exhaustless triumph would still have been for hour upon hour, he was forced to obey that gesture of command. Mastiff-like both in courage and ferocity, he was still driven out as a murderous animal is driven out by the *will* it reads in a human gaze. He longed to linger there the whole night through, and ring every change upon that note of ruin, and watch every spasm of the overburdened life, and turn every screw and wheel in that rack on which he stretched his friend.

But he dared not; he felt that he must leave his work to bear its fruit and harvest of misery unwatched; he knew it as the murderers of Alcibiades knew that none could come near, with life, to the menaced danger and the

mighty woe that looked unquailing on them from the flaming eyes of the roused Sybarite, the discrowned idol, the awakened Epicurean, called out in the dead of night to stand face to face with his destruction. The hirelings of Pharnabazus slew the Greek; Trevenna, less merciful, left the living man to suffer.

The velvet swept down behind him, the door closed, and he drew it softly after him; then he paused in the stillness of the breaking dawn that was rising on all the sleeping world without, and listened with an expectancy upon his face.

On the silence he heard a heavy crashing fall, like the fall of a stricken tree; then all was still with the stillness of the grave.

He smiled, and passed onward through the second door, and down the corridor and staircase of the house that had been opened to him, night and day, with a hospitality that no claims could weary and no exactions chill, and went out through the lighted hall, with its bloom of exotic colour and its richness of jasper and porphyry. As he passed the statue of the great minister standing there, white and majestic, amidst the foliage of American plants and the glow of Eastern flowers, he looked upward to the sculptured face with a glance of triumph, of achievement, of satisfied revenge, that in the intensity of its evil and its cruelty was almost grand by the sheer force of strength and purpose.

"Monseigneur, monseigneur," he murmured, in that thirsty exultation, flinging his victory and his mockery in the face of the lifeless marble, "how is it with your beloved one *now*?"

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## CHAPTER II.

*"Tout est perdu, fors l'Honneur."*

THE morning sun straying fitfully in through the thick leafy shades and trellised creepers of the winter garden beyond, as the day rose high and bright over a busy waking world, found the ruined man lying where he had fallen, struck down by the blow that had beggared him of all, as a cedar is struck by the lightning. He lay there insensible to all except his agony, his hands clenched upon the leopard-skins that strewn his hearth, his brain heavy with the pent blood that seemed on fire.

The shock had fallen on his life as suddenly as, in tropic latitudes, the black tempestuous night falls down upon the shadowless day. Yesterday he had been rich in every earthly treasure; to-day he was beggared, shamed, dishonoured. Ruin!—it was upon him like the vague, confused horror of a nightmare whose bonds he could not break; he could not realise its despair nor measure its desolation; he felt like one drugged with opiate poisons that bring a thousand loathsome shapes thronging between their dreamer and the light of day and the world of men. He had been a stranger to the mere pain of transient human sorrow; he was stunned to unconsciousness by the world-wide misery that felled him down at a stroke, as the iron mace fells an ox. Hours passed; he knew nothing of their flight; the gas burned in the chandeliers above him, still shedding its flood of light that looked garish and yellow beside the brightness of morning that streamed in from the garden beyond. There was profound silence round him, broken by nothing save the monotonous murmur of the fountains falling yonder; the faint noise of the streets could not penetrate here, and the sounds of the moving household were shut out in



a deathly stillness. He was left to the solitude which was all the mercy that life now could give him. The dog alone was with him, and crouched, patient and watchful, moaning now and then with sympathetic pain for the misery it could not comprehend, and gathered close against him where he lay.

As the sun grew brighter in the palm and flower isles beyond, the retriever tried to rouse him, as on a battlefield dogs will essay to waken their slaughtered masters; it thrust its muzzle against his hands, and laid its broad head against the disordered richness of his hair, moaning with piteous entreaty and fond, dumb caress. At last the patient efforts moved him; he looked up in the dog's eyes with a blind, bewildered gaze, and rose slowly and staggeringly to his feet, like a man feeble from protracted illness. He had no clear memory of what had passed; he could have recalled nothing, save that one word in which all was told,—“ruin!”

He looked mechanically round the familiar beauty of the chamber; the hues of the pictures, the grace of the sculpture, the lavish luxury of every detail, the peace and fairness of the charmed tranquillity, seemed so many mockeries of his woe. In the midst of wealth he stood a beggared man; with the world at his feet yesterday, he stood now dispossessed of every earthly thing.

He had sold his birthright for ten years' delight! And not of the world, not of his wealth, not of the fame of his name and the worship of men, not even of the woman whom he loved, did he think in that first moment of awaking to this mighty desolation that had fallen on him: it was of the trust of his fathers that he had forfeited, of the home of his race that he had lost.

Esau-like, he had bartered his kingly heritage for the sensuous pleasures of an hour; and the sole memory

that lived through the stupor of his brain were those brief, brutal words that devils seemed to hiss for ever in his ear—"You have lost all!"

A convulsion shook his limbs; a great voiceless sob rose in his throat; his head drooped upon his arms, veiling his face as the Romans veiled theirs before outrage and calamity. "Oh! my God! my God!" he prayed, in his agony, "give me death,—not *this!*"

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The only mercy life had left him—the privilege to suffer in solitude—could be his but a brief space. After the bitterness of the night followed the worse bitterness of the risen day, when its witnesses must come about him; when its wretched tale must be rung on his ear in all its changes; when the world must flood in to wonder, to smile, to sigh, to censure, and yet worse, to pity; when the condemned must go out to the cross, to be stretched and nailed and lifted up in crucifixion within sight of the gathered crowds. When he remembered all these things, it seemed to him more than life could bear to go through them; when he slowly roused to the real meaning of this beggary that had suddenly seized him in the midst of his joyous and magnificent existence, he recoiled from its endurance with a sickening shudder, as the bravest man will recoil from the approach of a drawn-out and excruciating death.

Once the thought passed him,—Why meet it? Why await this living grave which yawned for him, when the rest of the dead might be taken,—the blank, blest silence of the tomb be his, instead of the world's pillory and the exile's wretchedness?

Close at his hand lay the pistols to which his torturer had referred with a jest that might be his tempting; they were loaded to the muzzle, as they had been carelessly

laid down the morning previous, after an hour's pistol-shooting in his gardens below with a gay party. His grasp mechanically closed on one of them. Over and over again, in his serene security of happiness, he had smiled and said he would not live to brook a single hour of pain; the jest had become a terrible reality. One touch, one moment's blindness,—then oblivion; the world and his own ruin would be as naught, powerless to sting or harm. Were it not better than to live on to face all that must come to him with the rising day? The old weary wonder of Hamlet, that pursues every mind through every age, rose in him now; the old, eternal, never-answered question came to him as it comes to so many:—Why live, when every breath of life is pain?

For a moment his worst foe was nigh the fulfilment of his worst wish; for a moment, in the devastation of every hope and every possession, death and its escape allured him with a horrible force. All that made life worth the living was dead in him; the body only was left to perish: why leave breath in it, when to breathe was only to prolong and to intensify an anguish without hope? For a moment he lifted the weapon up; its chill touch was the only kiss left to him now, the only caress of pity he could know. His head sunk down against it, leaning on its mouth as it had used to lean on the softly-beating hearts of women who loved him. A moment, and his dead limbs would have been stretched there on his hearth in such a close to the history of his life as would have sated even the lust of his unrelenting foe.

A ray of the sun, straying in across the yellow heat of the chandelier-lights, fell across the white features of a bust that stood at the far end of the chamber,—the same features and the same sculpture as the statue to which Trevenna had murmured his valediction. The light il-

lumined the marble, giving to the mouth almost breath, to the eyes almost life, with its sweet spring-day warmth. Chandos saw it as his own eyes stared vacantly and without sense into the empty space.

His arm dropped; his hand unloosed its hold; he laid the weapon down unused.

He had treasured his father's memory, he had venerated his father's fame, with a great love that no time weakened. He remembered how his father once had bidden him make "the people honour him for his own sake;" and he was about to die a dog's death by his own act, lacking the courage to rise and meet the fate that his own madness brought him!

With that memory the temptation passed. Philip Chandos had died, like Chatham, in his nation's cause; the last Marquis had died upon the scaffold to save his honour from forfeit, and those who had trusted him from betrayal; he would not put beside *those* deaths the history of a suicide's fall.

Such as his doom was, he accepted it.

He rose and walked towards the window, with the uncertain, tremulous gait of a man dead-drunk. He drew the heavy curtains aside, and looked out with aching, scorching eyes. The hum of the streets in the distance rolled in on the morning air; the faint busy noises of life came across the stillness of the gardens; a clock was striking twelve. Each sound, each murmur, every echo of the existence stirring round him, every shiver of the linden-leaves near him, throbbed through his brain as though they were the clanging, jangling iron strokes of deafening bells; every sense and pulse of living things came to him with an excruciating pain, like the touch of a knife on a bared nerve. The day was at its height; solitude could be no longer possible. Even now the

woman whom he loved watched for his coming; in a few hours his world awaited him; even that very night, all that was highest and fairest in the land was bidden to his house; even that very night, the fame and the fashion of his name were to give success to the crippled artist's best-beloved creation. The world looked for him; to be alone was too rich a luxury, too merciful a sentence. He must go out and endure this thing which had come to him, in the broadness of daylight,—in the sight of all men.

As memory rushed on him of all that must be borne, of all that had been lost, he bent his head as though under the weight of some insupportable bodily burden; a sickness of horror was upon him; he strove to realise all that was ended for him, and he could not. Only yesterday his hands had been filled with every fairest gift of life; he could not bring himself to know that they were now stricken as empty as the outstretched hands of any beggar sitting at his gate.

The paralysis of an absolute despair fell on him, mute, tearless, unmoved—the rigidity that falls on mind and brain and heart under the pressure of some immeasurable adversity.

He had to hear the worst; with the rising day came all the day's course must unfold. He could not have the partial peace of loneliness; he could not have such comparative mercy as those have who, bereaved of what they love, know their doom at once, and can seek solitude to bear it. Step by step, letter by letter, he must pass through every detail of his desolation; and, soon or late, publicity must proclaim it to all who should choose to listen. He could have no rest, no pause, no reprieve; his misery had hunted him down, and must be met and faced.

The sun shining in through the gas-light, that burned

dull and lustreless in the noonday, shone on the diamonds glittering on his dress; his eyes fell on them as, in the extremity of wretchedness, the mind will strangely play with some trifle of which it has no consciousness. He looked at them dreamily, and wondered why he wore them: a blank had fallen between him and every memory; it seemed a life-time since the night just passed; it seemed as though the life that was parted from him by a few hours only, had been destroyed for an eternity. Yet with the sight of them came one remembrance; he heard, as if it stole on his ear now, the low whisper of the lips he loved as they had murmured, "Come to me to-morrow,"—murmured it with the softness of a good-night blush, with the lingering light of sweet eyes of farewell!

The morrow was now to-day. How had it dawned for each!

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He had to hear the worst. In this thing there could be no delay; under this sentence there could be no waiting-point of preparation or of hope. He must meet the gaze of other men, and listen while their voices coldly told the story of his ruin.

He bade them come and tell him all,—to the furthest letter of his doom. Despair is often bitterly calm; it was so now with him. In solitude, nature had given way, and sunk prostrated; before another's eyes, pride supplied the place of strength, and lent him its fictitious force.

With the noon, Trevenna returned, as a hound returns to the slot of his quarry, when once loosed from the coursing-slip that has held it back perforce. He re-entered the chamber as soon as permission came to him. He was the holder of all papers, the comptroller of all finance, the director of all affairs, connected with the Clarencieux properties; with him, even more than with

the lawyers, lay the knowledge of all their minutiae; through him, more than through any, must come the unfolding of the million things that went to make up the one vast sum of destruction. He could not be driven out from the scene of his work; for by him alone could the thousand meshes of the net which, unseen and unsuspected, he had woven, be traced and moved. He had secured more than his victory and his vengeance; he had secured the imperative necessity that he should behold the fruits of both.

Yet even he, evil as was the brute greed in him, started at sight of the wreck that he had wrought. Last night he had looked upon Chandos in the full brilliance of his youth, of his splendour, of his fashion, of his shadowless content; he saw him now broken, exhausted, aged, altered as the flight of twenty peaceful years could never have changed him. He was still in the court-dress of the ball he had quitted when his fate fell on him: its richness was disordered, its lace crushed and soiled, its ribbon-knots and broideries tangled; but its jewelled elegance set in deadlier contrast the haggard whiteness of his face, the shattered look of his whole form; it marked in ghastlier contrast what he had been and what he was.

The gas was still burning in all the crystal globes and silver branches as Trevenna entered. Chandos had no sense of the things that were about him, of the dress he wore, of the passage of the noonday hours; and his household, who felt that some great adversity had suddenly befallen him, dared not venture nigh unsummoned. He stood against the hearth as his guest advanced; his eyes were bloodshot, his hair disordered and damp with the dew of his forehead; his face was bloodless: beyond these, he "gave no sign."

He looked at Trevenna with a tranquil, lingering

gaze; if there were reproach in it, the reproach remained otherwise unspoken.

"Tell me all," he said, briefly; and his voice, faint though it was, did not falter.

For one instant his traitor was silent, baffled, and wonderstruck.

Fine as were his intuition and insight into character, he had made an error common with men of his mould; he had undervalued a nature it was impossible he could comprehend. Studying the weaknesses of his patron's temper, he had not perceived that they were rather on the surface than ingrained; he had disdained the facility that had lent Chandos so willing a tool into his hands, the gentleness, the frankness, the generosity, the unsuspecting pliability of temper; he had looked with contempt on the imaginative, idealic mind, and the effeminate softness of the man he hated. He had never perceived that there were qualities beneath these that might leap to life in an instant, if once roused; he had never dreamed that Alcibiades the voluptuary could ever become Alcibiades the warrior. Had he found Chandos shot by his own hand, in the light of the young day, he would have felt no surprise; he would have thought the close in fitting keeping with the tenor of his career; to find him braced to look his desolation calmly in the face, staggered, and almost unnerved him.

But in an instant he recovered himself. The ruin was complete; and it should go hard, he thought, if to it he did not drive his victim to add—dishonour!

With the concise rapidity of a mind trained to *précis*-writing and to logical analysis and compression, he had every detail clear as the daylight, proved to the letter; and he showed with mathematical exactitude that everything was gone. His papers were of the plainest, his ac-



counts the most perfectly audited, his representation of others' statements lucid to a marvel. If he had been opening a budget to a crowded House, he could not have more finely mingled conciseness with comprehensiveness, geometrical exactitude with unerring quotation, than now when he came to prove the hopelessness of his best friend's beggary.

Hopeless it was. The inheritance which Chandos and his world had thought so secure and so exhaustless, had melted away as a summer evening's golden pomp and colour fade, till not a line of light is left to show where once it glowed. It was the old, worn-out, ever-recurring story of endless imprudence, of absolute destruction. If other hands had woven half the meshes of the net spread round him, if other hands had spread their snares and temptings to make the fatal descent the surer, if any villany were in this thing, there was no trace that could even hint it. It might even have been said that the best had been done, with patient labour, to arrest the downward and irresistible course of a blind and unthinking extravagance, and done wisely and toilsomely, though in vain.

The whole mass of the fortune was expended; the debt-pressure had accumulated to an enormous extent. Who could say where what was scattered was gone? Who could check now the piled-up bills of hirelings and kitchen-chiefs? Who could tell now whether all the great sums paid had been paid rightly? Who could know now whether the items of that magnificent prodigality were justly scored down or not? It would have been as hopeless a task to thread the buried intricacies of all these things, as to take the Danaïds' labours and seek to fill with the waters of a too-late prudence the bottomless vessels through which this lost wealth had been poured.

Trevenna, indeed, showed how, when he had first

come to share any management of these matters, the locust-swarm had already eaten far into the fair birth-right that Philip Chandos had bequeathed. He failed to show why he had not forced the bitter knowledge on his friend's careless ease in time to save much, though not all: yet even this discrepancy in his narrative he glossed over with an orator's skill, a tactician's sophistry, until he seemed throughout it to have been the one steadfast, wise, and unheeded Artabanus who had vainly stood by the side of the crowned Xerxes and pleaded with him not to fling riches and honour and life into the grave of the devouring *Ægean*.

Chandos heard in unbroken silence.

Gigantic sums were numbered and added before him in gigantic confusion. Tables of figures and of estimates were placed before his eyes, and told him nothing, save that their sum-total was—bankruptcy! He had never known or asked the cost of the pleasures he enjoyed; he had never speculated on the worth of all the luxuries by which he had been surrounded from his infancy. His mind had never been trained to balance the comparisons of receipt and expenditure. He could have told, to a marvel of accuracy, whether a picture, a statue, a cameo, was worth its price, through the fineness of a connoisseur's judgment; but beyond these he knew no more than any child-Dauphin in the Bourbon age what was the value of all the things which made up the amusement and the adornment of his life. A man well skilled in finance finds it a hopeless task to glean the truth of squandered moneys. To him only one thing could stand out clear and immutable,—the fact that all was gone. It was impossible for him to dispute the mass of evidence heaped before him, as impossible also to dispute the mass of debt that was brought before him. He had believed that

no creditor had ever had claim on him for a day; but, now that the demands were made, he could not prove they were undue. Of receipts, of accounts, he had never given a thought: his agents and his stewards had been allowed *carte blanche* to do as they would; they could not be blamed for having used the power, and there was no evidence that they had abused it. The demands of the debts were vast; there was not a witness that could be brought to their injustice or their illegality. There was nothing with which to face or to deny them; they must devour as they would. He heard in unbroken silence. Once alone he spoke; it was as the name of Tindall and Co., the bill-discounting firm, among his creditors, came into sight, pressing for heavy sums.

"How are *they* among the swarm?" he said, with that unnatural serenity which he had preserved throughout the interview unmoved still. "I never in my life borrowed gold, either of Jew or Christian."

For an instant the face of his tormentor flushed slightly with the same transient emotion of shame which had moved him in the portrait-gallery of Clarencieux.

"For yourself? Perhaps not to your own knowledge," he answered, promptly; "but for your friends you have many a time. How many bills you have accepted for men in momentary embarrassment! In nine cases out of ten these bills have never been met by those in whose favour they were drawn. They have always been popular with the trade. Your signature was thought the signature of so rich a man! This firm has bought in most of that floating paper, and has taken its own time to press for payment: that time has come at last. There lies your writing; the bills cannot be dishonoured without dishonouring you. No loan was ever so costly to its lender

as that loan which looks so slight at first,—the loan of your mere name!”

Chandos heard him calmly still. The extremity of misery had reached him, and the peace of absolute hopelessness was on him.

“You say, ‘perhaps not to my own knowledge;’ unknown to me, then, have I borrowed moneys of these usurers?”

“Once or twice lately,—yes. Forgive me, Chandos, if in my zeal to screen or save you I plunged you deeper into this chaos. You sent over for great sums to be lodged in Turkish and Athenian banks, whilst you were abroad this winter: you wrote to me to lodge them there. I knew that if I sent, on your bidding, to your own bankers, the amounts you required from time to time would overdraw by thousands the little left of your original capital, and that the bank would inform you of your improvidence without delay or preparation. I could not tell how to spare you; and I always persuaded myself that in some way or other—mainly, I thought, by some very high marriage—you would rebuild your shattered fortunes. I went to these Tindall people; I effected arrangements with them to supply you with the moneys. They held my acknowledgments for the amounts till you returned; they knew me and they knew you. When you came back, you may remember, I brought you papers to sign at Clarencieux, and pressed you to give me a business interview. You would not wait and hear me,—you never would; you signed; and I had not heart or courage, I confess, to tell you then at how terrible a pass things were with you. I did wrong; I admit it frankly. I was guilty of what I should call the most villanous procrastination in another man; but I knew it was too late to save you. I was willing to let you have as long a re-

prieve in your soft pleasures as I could; and until your engagement with the Lady Valencia, I always thought that some distinguished and rich alliance would restore the balance of your affairs. And there is this much to be said for it: the error I committed in essaying to save you, added but very, very little to the mountain already raised of inextricable debts and difficulties. It only gave you six months more of peace: you, self-indulgent as you have been, would have deemed even those worth the purchasing."

The sophistries were deftly spoken. To a man more aware of business customs and of monetary negotiations, Trevenna would have been too astute to offer such an untenable and unlikely explanation; with Chandos the discrepancies passed unnoted, because he knew nothing of the method of pecuniary transactions. All he had known had been to draw money and to have it. But, though the financial errors passed him, his instinct led him to feel the falsity and the hollowness of the arguments to himself. Suspicion was utterly foreign to him; his attachment to Trevenna was genuine and of long date; doubt forced itself slowly in on a nature to which it was alien, yet a vague loathing of this man, who had let him go on unwarned to his destruction, began to steal on him; a disbelief in his friend wound its way into his thoughts with an abhorrent strength.

"I understand," he said, simply; "you have betrayed me!"

For the instant his traitor's eyes drooped, his cheek flushed, his conscience smote him. Under the accusation of the man to whom he owed all, and whom he had pursued with a bloodhound's lust, the baseness of his own treachery rose up for a single moment before his own sight. But it passed; he even frankly met the eyes whose

silent reproach condemned him more utterly than any words.

"Betrayed? Do you take me for a second Iscariot? Betrayed! how so? Because I tried to save you pain with means that proved at best fallacious? Because I was guilty of an error of judgment that I frankly regret and as frankly condemn? No! blame me as you will, I may have deserved it; but accuse me of disloyalty you shall not. If every one had been as faithful to you, Ernest, as I have been, you would not now hear the history of your own ruin."

There was a grim, ironic truth in the inverted meaning of the last sentence, that the temper of the speaker relished with cynical humour. If others had been as faithful in friendship as he had been in hatred, the positions of both would have indeed been changed.

Chandos answered nothing; his eyes still rested with the same look on the man whom he had defended through all evil report and enriched with such untiring gifts. The truth of his own nature instinctively felt the falsity of the loyalty avowed him; yet that such black ingratitude could live in men as would be present here were his doubt real, took longer than these few hours—more evidence even than these testimonies—to be believed by him. He had loved humanity, and thought well of it, and served it with unexhausted charity.

Trevenna moved slightly; hardened and tempered as was the steel of his bright, bold audacity, even he could not bear the voiceless rebuke that asked still, "*Et tu, Brute?*"

"Let us speak of the future," he said, rapidly; "we have seen that the past is hopeless and irremediable. You know the worst now; how do you purpose to meet it?"

"You have said already, all must go."

The same perfect tranquillity was in the reply; it was the ossification of despair.

"True,—even Clarencieux."

An irrepressible shudder shook his listener's limbs, but he bent his head in unchanged silence.

"And will the woman you love not go with the rest?"

"She will be given her freedom."

Trevenna looked at him with the same impatient amaze with which he had started as he had entered the chamber. He could not realize that the voluptuary whose weakness he had so long studied, that the pleasure-seeker whose pococurantism had so long been the subject of his scorn, could be the man who answered him now, thus calm in his endurance.

"But, if she love you, she will not take it. If all that you poets say of the sex be true, she will cling but the closer to you in your fallen fortunes. What think you? I, I confess, doubt it. She is so poor; she is so ambitious; she has so sought the restoration of your Marquisate!"

Chandos stretched out his hand; his breath caught as with the pang of one who can endure no more.

"It matters nothing to speak of this. I have heard your worst tidings; now leave me for a space."

"No; hear me yet a little longer. I fancy I see a way to spare you some portion, at least, of your heritage, and to spare you at least this loveliness you covet. Will you listen?"

He made a gesture of assent. Hope was dead in him; but he was passive through the very exhaustion of extreme suffering.

"See here!" pursued his tempter. "If you go to her and say, 'I am a beggared man,' will her tenderness remain with you? You know her best. I trust it may;

but, frankly, my friend, I fear! She loves you; yes, all women do. She loves you as well as *she* can love; but she loves power more. Tell her of this thing which has overtaken you, and I believe she will be lost to you for ever."

Chandos shrank from the words.

"Leave me! let me be! It avails nothing——"

"Yes, it does. *Why need she know it?*"

The question stole out, tempting and alluring as the sophistries that beguiled Faust.

"Why?" He re-echoed the word almost in stupor.

"Ay, why? Who need tell her? Listen here. I can temporise with your creditors for a little while. Each does not know how heavy the claims of the rest are, and none wholly suspect—hell-hounds though they be—how complete is your beggary. Your marriage is fixed for an early date from this; let the settlements be drawn up as they *would have been*, and the ceremony concluded. A marriage, even though to a penniless bride, will throw your creditors off their cast. They will believe you are secure, or would you wed with one so portionless? You can leave for abroad on your marriage-day; I fancy I could quiet them enough to let you go. Take the Clarendieux diamonds with you. Meanwhile I will send off, under divers names and in secret, many treasures of yours, that will pass out of England unknown to those who have these claims, and will be sufficient by their sale to enable you to live in moderate ease, though, it is true, without affluence. The rest you must let go; but you will have secured much,—your liberty, your love, and a remnant of your possessions."

"What! you would tempt me to dishonour!"

"Dishonour? Whew!" answered Trevena, lightly. "Call it so, if you like. *I* call it common sense. How



many men, pray, quit England for their debts, and see nothing but a sensible care-taking for themselves in it? Doubtless there are in those bills and estimates very heavy overcharges—we can't check them now; but I don't doubt there are; *maîtres d'hôtel* will cheat, butlers will charge per-centage, tradesmen will add compound interest, bill-discounters will demand usurer's toll; if you take a little from them, you only take your own. As regards your fair Queen of Lilies, if she love you, what wrong can you do her? Wed her, and she will be your own; and, granted, she is very lovely. Go to her now and say, 'I am a beggared, self-outlawed, ruined man,' and you must know as well as I, Chandos, that in a few months' time you will see her given to one of your rivals' arms."

Chandos swept round to face him, the fire of passion flashing into the weary pain of his eyes, the contraction of a great torture in the quivering lines of his lips.

"Are you a fiend? You would tempt me to disgrace, after having lured me into ruin——"

"Patience, *caro mio*," said his allurer, softly. "You are hard on your best friend. Tempt you? what is there of 'dishonour' in what I suggest? On my life, I see nothing. Last night you knew no more of your ruin than the world knows now; certainly, you are justified in withholding the world from your confidence as long as you choose. Is a man 'dishonoured' because when he holds a bad hand at whist he does not show the cards and tell his ill luck, but keeps his own counsel, and plays the game out in the best way he can? *Your* cards are bad now; but you are no more bound to expose them than he. Men are not your keepers, that you are called on to proclaim to them that, while you thought yourself a millionaire, you were in truth a beggar. You are proud;

why give yourself this degradation? why pillory yourself for public mockery? You have dazzled them and outshone them: will you bear their laugh and their sneer when the tables are turned? You have had homage from the highest: will you brook it when the lowest, unpunished, may jeer at your fall? You have lived with royal brilliance: will you feel no sting when society chatters of how rotten at core was the royalty? You love with all the blindness of passion: will you feel no sting when the beauty you covet is possessed and enjoyed by another?"

Blunt, sometimes coarse in ordinary speech, when he saw occasion, Trevenna could summon both eloquence of language and persuasiveness of phrase; could wind with subtle tact into the hearts of his listeners, and strike surely and softly what bolt he would home.

Chandos heard him; his head had sunk upon his breast, and from his white, parched lips his breath came in painful, gasping spasms. His agony was mortal; his temptation, for the moment, was very great.

Subtly and insidiously the words stole on his ear, goading pride, torturing passion, waking all the longing of desire, lulling and confusing every dictate of honour, like the dreamy potency of a nicotine, till cowardice looked strength, fraud looked wisdom,—till a sin seemed just, a lie seemed holy.

"Because you have forfeited your birthright," pursued his Iscariot, "you are not called on to beggar yourself utterly, and to summon the world in to pity and to jibe you. That which you did not know yourself last night, it can be a small sin not to proclaim to men to-day! If she love you, she will thank you that you do not mar her sweetest hours with your own calamity. If she love you, the blow will fall softened on her if she only learn

it when she is your wife, whom no evil can part from you. Conceal your ruin but a few weeks,—a few days,—and the woman you covet is yours, proclaim it now, and you will forfeit *her*, with all the rest that you have gambled away in ten mad years. Do as I say, and her beauty is your own."

A sigh, wrenched as in a death-pang, alone answered him.

"Can you hesitate?" said Trevenna; and his eyes gleamed with an eager light as he lured his prey on. "Only withhold for a few days the knowledge you yourself had not last night, and she is given to you; tell it, and some other will taste the sweetness of her lips, and rifle as his own the loveliness you covet. Choose!"

A low moan broke from the man he tortured; he wavered; he almost yielded; he was sorely tempted.

All his nobler, better instincts were forgotten under the spell of that insidious tempting: all he knew was the yearning of his love; all he heard was the subtle voice that bade him take evil as his good, and hung out to him, as the sole price of all he longed for, one single sin,—*a lie!* A sin so venial, as men hold it,—a sin so familiar in the world, that every trader's ordinary commerce and every social difficulty's small entanglement is filled with it and solved by it,—a sin so slight, as a baneful license has decreed it, yet a sin in his eyes accursed as the vilest of dishonour,—a sin, as he deemed it, that would mark him out for ever an alien to his blood and a disgrace to his name.

For the instant only it tempted him,—tempted him with all the mad longing of passion that dulled and dwarfed all other thoughts in its own intensity. He lifted his head, and for the moment his voice rang with the old clear melody of other days:—

"Out of my presence! Cease to tempt me!—cease to torture me! By God, I will *not* yield!"

Trevenna bowed, and backed towards the door; he was too careful a tactician to press what was useless, to pursue what was unasked.

"So be it; I have done! I spoke but in the roughness of my common sense, in the ignorance of my coarser nature of the fine porcelain you haughty gentlemen are made of. I would have served you, had you let me; but since you have such a fancy for flinging yourself to the crying pack, why, it must be so; and *they* are ready! You have the last marquis's superb consolation,—'*Tout est perdu, fors l'honneur.*' I hope it may content you!"

Chandos, from where he stood, crossed the room with a sudden impulse, as a stag, driven from bay, springs at the hounds surrounding him.

"If it were not to make you viler than the beasts, I should think it failed to content *you*, and that, after the beggary you have let me drift to without a word of warning, you want to drive me farther yet down into shame and shamelessness!"

Trevenna looked at him with a steady, unflinching gaze: he was on his guard now.

"You speak on the spur of pain, *mon prince*, and wrong me. I sought to serve you. If my blunter, ruder senses failed to feel the 'dishonour' your aristocratic blood recoils from, put it down to my failure in delicacy, not to my lack of loyalty. One word more, and I leave you, at your wish. Have you forgotten that this is the day of the new opera, and that all your world will be about you before many hours? Without you, the opera must fail. Shall I give out that you are ill, and that the matter is postponed?"

Chandos shuddered involuntarily, and the nerves of

his mouth quivered. All that had befallen him, all that the future held, had never stood out before him in its desolation as now, when he remembered—the world.

“Alter nothing,” he said, with an effort. “Let them come.”

“Come! What! Can you meet them?”

He smiled—a smile more utterly haggard and heart-broken than any sign of grief. There was a meaning in it, too, from which the daring and hardy nature of his foe recoiled.

“I have neither killed myself nor you in these past hours. There is little that will be hard to endure since I have withheld from *that!*”

Trevenna looked upward at him for one glance; then, silenced and with an unfamiliar awe and fear upon him, let fall the heavy velvet and left him once more to his solitude.

### CHAPTER III.

#### The Love of Woman.

THE Queen of Lilies stood beside one of the windows of her own boudoir, restless, disquieted, half swayed by anger and half by anxiety. So many hours of the day had passed, and her lover had not approached her. Where she stood there was nothing near her but the foliage and clusters of innumerable flowers; the brightness of the declining day was shed full on hers. She looked a woman to satisfy a sculptor's dream, to haunt an artist's thoughts, to be hymned in a poet's canción; yet there was about her that nameless and fugitive coldness which, in the fairest statue, chills the senses and the heart.

Her hand was listlessly wandering among the clusters of blossoms; and every now and then, as the impatience and disquiet of her thoughts increased, she broke them

off and cast them down, beating her foot in haughty irritation on them till their fragrance and their colour perished.

The door unclosed; she turned, a smile lighting her eyes, and lending a lovely warmth to her cheek. She swept forward with the grace of her step, with half-playful, half-proud words of reproach for such unexplained desertion. Quickly they paused upon her lips; she looked in his face alarmed and amazed.

"Ernest! what has happened? You are ill?"

For all answer, he pressed her to his heart and kissed her many times with a passion almost terrible in its force, the fever of his lips scorching her own like fire. He held her as men hold the dead form of their mistress, which they must lay down and leave for ever, never again to meet their sight, never again to cling to their embrace.

Then in silence he released her, with his last caress upon her lips, and moved from her, while his limbs, weak with long fasting, shook like a woman's, and his head sank down upon his breast. He would sooner have gone out to his death upon a scaffold than have told her what he came to tell.

She watched him in fear and terror. She saw that he suffered as no physical pain could make him suffer; she saw that he was altered as no illness could have changed him. She swept softly to his side again; she laid her fair arms round him; she lifted to him her beautiful face, which in that moment tempted him to dishonour as his betrayer's words had never done.

"My love, my love," she murmured, anxiously, "what is it?—what has grieved you?"

He turned his eyes on hers, and in them she read a look that paralyzed her, that haunted her throughout her lifetime,—a look of such unutterable anguish that she

cowered down and shrank back as she met it, struck by it as by a blow.

"Calamity has come to me," he said briefly, whilst his voice sounded hollow as a reed, and wrung from him as confessions were wrung from men upon the rack. "I have been a living lie to you and to the world. Listen."

Then, as he spoke the last word, his calm forsook and his strength failed him; he fell before her, his hands clenched in her dress, his head bowed down upon her feet. In a few broken, passionate, disconnected words, wild in their misery, yet burned into her mind for ever as aquafortis burns its record into steel, he told her all.

There was a profound silence in the chamber,—a silence in which he only heard the dull, oppressed beating of his heart,—a silence in which his head was still bowed down as he knelt. He dared not look upward to her face. He loved her, and it passed the bitterness of death to bring this misery on her young life; he loved her, and he had to utter words that might divorce them for eternity.

For many moments the silence lasted,—a silence so agonized to him that in it he seemed to live through years, as men in the moments of a violent death. He longed, as one perishing in the desert longs for water, for one word of tenderness, one promise of fidelity; he longed for them with an intensity great as the fall he bade her look upon.

None came.

She drew herself slowly from him where he knelt, and stood in the dignity of her matchless grace, mutely gazing at him with those eyes which had all the chilliness, as they had all the lustre of the stars. Her face was white and drawn like his own; but in the amazed fixity into which it had set, there was no trace of pity for him, there was no grief that sprang from tenderness.

"This is a strange tale," she said, at last, and her voice was bitterly, bitterly cold, though it was tremulous with the tremor of incredulous rage. "A strange tale. You must pardon me if I fail to believe it."

He looked for the first time upward at her. All hope he might unconsciously have cherished that her love might be stronger than its trial, and vows that had been vowed him in his prosperity not prove false in his adversity, forsook him now. He rose slowly to his feet, and stood beside her; and in his eyes came the same wistful reproachful pain that had been in them when he had looked at his betrayer.

"Believe!" he said, wearily; "believe! Can you look me in the face and doubt?"

She stood aloof from him, lifted in her full height, her foot beating the bruised colourless petals of the flowers she had destroyed, her fair face haggard and rigid, her gaze fixed on him, pitiless yet passionate in the coldness of its unrelenting scorn.

"Believe!" she repeated, while her lips shook and her bosom heaved. "Believe that you are the ruined bankrupt that you tell me,—yes; but believe that you have been in the ignorance of your own beggary that you plead,—no! ten thousand times *no!*"

He looked at her in a mute amazed stupor. He had never known but the tenderness and the softness of women. This vileness of imputed fraud flung at him by the one who, but a moment before, had lifted her sweet lips for his kiss, paralyzed him with its wantonness of merciless indignity.

"Ruin does not fall in a day," she pursued, while the haughty acrid words came from her lips in a quiver of rage that her graceful breeding alone reined in from the violence of passion. "Such ruin as yours is, you confess,



the work of years. How perfectly you have duped the world and me!"

He who had loved her with a great and most disinterested love, yet who had refused to win her through a falsehood, could have killed her in his agony as he heard her now,—could have crushed her in his embrace, and trampled out this life that looked so fair and was so merciless, that had smiled on him with so divine a forgery of love, and that flung at him in his darkest hour a dishonour that his worst foe would never have dared to hint.

Yet he stood before her with a calm dignity, a proud reproach.

"Look in my eyes, and see if I could lie! Had I chosen, I could have wedded you by a fraud, and made you mine, in ignorance of my fall. As it is, I set you free: it is your right."

"My right? Indeed! My right! The pity is you did not earlier remember what my rights and the world's both were, ere you chicaned us and misled us with the paste brilliance of your tinsel glitter. You could have wedded me by a fraud. I wonder you could hesitate at one fraud *more*, when you were so long practised in so many."

"Oh, God!—And yesterday you loved me!"

The cry broke out involuntarily from him. Yesterday her soft caresses had been his; a few days or weeks later, and she had been his wife, now—from *her* lips poured the cruellest invectives his ruin could ever hear, from *her* thoughts came the foulest taunt that could be thrown at him to goad his wretchedness.

"Yesterday,—yes! Yesterday the world and I alike believed in your honour and your rank. Yesterday we did not know you as you are,—a gamester, a trickster, a living falsehood to us both."

Men under less torture than he bore then have killed with a madman's blow the fair, false thing that taunted and that jibed them. A convulsive effort of self-restraint shuddered through him; then he stood tranquil still, and almost yielding to her still the forbearance her sex claimed for her. She had no pity for him; he would claim none.

"Your insult is undeserved," he said, briefly. "Believe or not, as you will; I have spoken truth, and all the truth. I sought you when my fate was such as all men envied me; it has changed, and I set you free. All I ask is, for the sake of others,—keep these tidings back until to-morrow; and, for yourself, forgive me that I ever——"

His voice broke down; his control forsook him; he loved her, and he thought only of all they would have been, of all they never now could be, to one another; and his heart went out to her in a great resistless longing that shattered pride and forgot injury, and only craved one touch of tenderness, one echo of the fond faith but yesterday so lovingly vowed to him. *He* was not changed: were these accidents of fortune, this visitation of calamity, to make him loathsome where he had been adored?

He stretched out his arms involuntarily.

"For the mercy of God, my love, my *wifel*—for the sake of all we should have been!—speak gentler to me in our wretchedness."

It was the only prayer he ever prayed for pity. In the moment of its entreaty, something softer, some grief more piteous and less absorbed in selfish violence, passed over her face. In the moment of that gesture of beseeching tenderness she could have thrown herself upon his breast and given up the world for him. Trevenna had rightly said she loved as well as *she* could love, and in this instant life asunder seemed a doom too terrible to bear. But the impulse passed swiftly: the weight of the

world was heavier and stronger on her than her love for him; he had destroyed her ambitions and had shattered her victory; she knew no thought save for what she deemed her wrong, no grief save for what she deemed her degradation; for her loveliness enshrined a heart of bronze, and her solitary idol was—herself. She stood unmoved, her head turned towards the light with a gesture of scorn, her foot still treading out the bruised fragments of the wasted flowers.

“Claim gentler words when you can prove juster deeds,” she said, with a bitterness that seemed to leave her fair lips with the lash of a leaden-weighted scourge. “You have lived one long falsehood in the sight of men; *they* may believe your pleaded ignorance of your bankrupt shame; they have long been your dupes, and *they* may be so still; *I* shall not. The premier offered you your marquis’s coronet; go take it! You refused it to my wish; you will accept it to screen you from the claimants of your debts!”

His gaze fastened on her, riveted there by a horrible fascination. Were those eyes, that froze him with so unpitying a hate, the eyes that yesterday had smiled up in his own? were those lips, that lashed him with such brutal taunts, the lips that yesterday had met his own in their last lingering caress?

His breath came slowly, and drawn with effort, as though life were ebbing out of him.

“Silence! you shame your sex! I thank God that I have known you as you are before my life was cursed with you.”

Without another word, he turned and left her,—left her with the crushed blossoms lying beneath her foot, and the summer light upon her loveliness.

## CHAPTER IV.

[The last Night among the Purples.

THE new opera began.

Fashion was prepared to patronise Genius; happily for Genius, it does not do it very often.

The *Ariadne in Naxos* was commenced, and the most brilliant audience of the season glanced in surprise to the empty box of its patron. The grand swell of the overture rolled out, and thrilled through the silent house with a new emotion. Such marvellous poems of sound, such pathetic echoes of sadness, such intense vibrations of passion, such spiritual cadences of thought!—in the creation that had issued from the lonely chamber of suffering, from the dreamy mind of a feeble cripple, there was that which caught the ear of the hearers with a new voice, and spoke to them with a new eloquence. They came to patronise; they stayed to feel!

As the overture closed in the throbbing of the waves of melody that swelled with a mighty thunder through the stillness, into the dazzling light and glitter of the thronged theatre Chandos entered.

The fairness of his face was unusually pale and unusually cold; his eyes had dark shadows under them, and had a singular hectic brilliance; otherwise there was no change.

"Late he is; been drinking," said a person in the stalls, who did not know him.

"Never drinks," said one who did. "Been gambling."

Trevenna, sitting by, set his teeth while he smiled.

"Curse him! he dies game," he thought, while he looked upward to the box as Chandos advanced to the front and stood there for a second, as though blinded with the light; then seated himself in his accustomed chair

and leaned slightly forward in full view of the thronged building, where there was scarce a seat in the grand tier but held some titled friend or foreign beauty who knew him familiarly or loved him well. No other noticed that slight pause as he stood with a paralysed, dizzy stupefaction coming into that blaze of radiance and crash of sound,—no one except his foe, who knew all that was suffered in it and all it meant.

There had never been a night in which he had been more on people's lips, and more in their praise and babble, than he was to-night. Foreigners looked at him eagerly as the man with whose *fêtes* all Paris had rung; strangers had him pointed out to them as the leader of the aristocracy, the former of fashion, the author of "Lu-crèce," the owner of Clarendieux. Peeresses wondered at the absence of his betrothed, and spoke of his appearance as the Duc de Richelieu at the princess's fancy-ball,—of his Watteau water-party at his Richmond bijou villa,—of the magnificence of the bridal gifts he had ordered for the Queen of Lilies. Poor men envied him bitterly,—bitterly; and rich men wondered why, with all their wealth, they could not buy his grace, his fame, his popularity. Women who had been loved by him, or had loved him vainly, looked at him, and alone were struck by some vague sense of pain and disquiet at the serenity of his face, at the glitter in the blue depths of the eyes that had ever till now smiled at life with so careless a brilliance.

He sat unmoved. He spoke, listened, acted precisely as he had done on any other of the many nights when he had led the verdict of that house on some new talent; there was not even a tremor in his hand, not even a quiver in his voice. The intense strength of intense agony was lent him for a time; the world-wide desert of desolation that spread around him gave him the desert's

arid and passionless calm; he had all the fictitious force, all the mechanical action, of fever. The recklessness of his nature was roused till he could have laughed aloud to think how he sat there, the observed of all eyes, the envied of all men, accredited by the world about him with every gift the gods could give, and knew himself that not a beggar in the streets was poorer, not a homeless dog starving to death more wretched, than he was.

He had not come to play out his terrible comedy from mockery or desperation; he had come because even in his darkest hour he would not forsake the man who was dependent on him, and whose whole future hung on the success which his own presence here alone could be certain to secure. But passing through it for this man's sake, the gigantic gulf that yawned between what he seemed and what he was, the knowledge of what his world thought of him and said of him in this his last night's reign over it, and of the mighty lie that, all unwitting to him, his whole life had been and was, struck on him with the horrible jest which despair oftentimes will seem to itself, and woke in him the desperate laughter with which men of his race had ridden in the old days of warfare down to the ring of spear-heads, down on to a certain death, to laugh still while the life-blood burst forth from a hundred wounds, and the hoofs of trampling chargers broke their bone and tore their nerve.

The music swelled out on the air, rising in aerial cadence and throbbing in eloquent passion, now clear and fresh as a spring bird's song, now supreme in its melancholy as the moan of autumn winds through Western forests of pine. Every joy denied him, every hope forbidden him, every smile he sought in vain, every sigh he breathed in suffering, Guido Lulli seemed to have recorded here. The music was sublime as a song of David, pure

as a young child's eyes. It might not throughout be coldly perfect for the ear, but it was far more; it was passionately human for the heart, it was eternally true for every time.

Chandos sat unmoved to the end. To him, though his hand had moulded many of its parts, though his sympathy had cherished it from its earliest birth, though his thoughts had many a time vibrated to its every chord, it was without sense or melody or meaning now; it was like the sound of rushing waters in his ear,—no more. Yet he sat unwavering to the end, and led with an unerring precision the bursts of applause that ever and again rang through the Opera-House.

It closed; the last magnificent chords re-echoed through a dead silence; then, through the thunder of public admiration, the name of Guido Lulli was given for ever to the fame he sought.

Chandos rose and left his box. He went to one, small, obscure, shut wholly away from the sight of the audience; here, alone, Lulli had been placed, shunning the view of the glittering throng, and dreading the notice or the speech of any with the nervous terror of a recluse. He unclosed the door softly. Stretched senseless on the ground he saw the Provençal's form, his hands above his head as he had fallen, in the moment of ecstasy, when for the first time the voices of the world had given him that promise of immortality of which he had so long and vainly dreamed.

Chandos stooped and raised him gently; the movement and the sweep of air from the open doorway roused him from his trance; his eyes unclosed, he looked upward, scarcely conscious still.

"It has triumphed! Ah! I can die so happy!"

The words left the cripple's lips with the sigh so rare in human life,—the sigh of perfect joy.

His gaze, dreamy and distant, like one who sees the visions of the future, wandered back, and knew the features that bent above him. The smile that was like sunlight beamed upon his face; he took his benefactor's hands and kissed them, the great tears coursing down his cheeks.

"Monseigneur, this is your gift! I cannot thank you. What are words? You have given me life, and more than life; you have given me immortality! I cannot reward you, but night and day I pray that God may pay my debt."

A smile came on Chandos' lips,—a smile so sad that it might have been either curse or prayer. He stooped over Lulli, and spoke with an infinite gentleness.

"You will be very famous in the years to come. Once or twice remember that I aided something to it. I shall be repaid enough."

And with those words of farewell—a last farewell, though the other knew it not—he left him before the musician could reply.

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"You eclipse yourself to-night," said a French princess to him, when, an hour later, his great world, having ordained the triumph of the opera, came, as they had long been bidden, to an entertainment in celebration of the success of the *Ariadne in Naxos*. "You revive the *fêtes* of our Grand Siècle."

The gardens were lighted with innumerable lamps gleaming among the trees; the winter-garden glanced a very paradise of oriental colour; the wax radiance fell on fairest brows, and the diamonds and sapphires glistened among silkiest hair; the low pleasant murmur of voices filled the chambers; the echoes of music came from the ball-rooms beyond; all the old life that he had known so



well, and led so dazzlingly, was about him now for the last time.

As the "thousand great lords" who "drank and praised the gods of gold and silver" at Belshazzar's banquet, while laughter and song echoed through the high halls of Babylon, saw not the foreshadowed doom written on the brow of the lord of the feast, and read not among the jewelled arabesques of the palace-wall the "Mene, Tekel, Upharsin" that rose out to his own sight, so those who came to Chandos to-night saw no sign upon his face, and had no thought that this was a farewell,—a farewell to joy, and peace, and women's love, and the honour of men, and all the gracious gifts and treasures of his life. They did not know. They saw no change in him. He had said in his heart that none should be able on the morrow to recall having noted in him one shadow of pain. The merr of his race had always been proud as they were reckless, capable of intense endurance as they were resigned to limitless indulgence; the spirit of his race rose in him now. Throughout this night—a night when such agony was on him as men of stronger will and harder training might have sunk under without shame—he let the world about see no trace that all was not with him as it had ever been. His face was quite colourless, and now and then he lost all sight or sense of where he was; yet he never let a word, a glance, a sigh, escape him which could have told his deadly secret.

One only, mingled among the crowds of princes, peers, and statesmen by right of long-established footing and familiarity, noted the dark gleam in his eyes as of one who defied fate with all the delirious daring of desperation, and knew all that was suffered, all that was suppressed,—and was content.

Once their eyes met, with a swaying cloud of per-

fumed laces, and delicate hues, and fair faces, and glittering orders, and sparkling jewels, parting them for the breadth of a chamber. It was a strange fellowship between the betrayer and the betrayed, this solitary knowledge of the doom that hung over the house that was now filled with light and melody, and the music of women's voices, and the names of those who controlled nations,—this mutual consciousness alone that as they met now they met for the last time for ever, that when this night should end, with it would end for ever the shadowless life that had been here so long.

To-night was the supreme martyrdom of the one, the supreme triumph of the other.

"Finished at last!" thought the man who had never let go his vow of vengeance since the summer night long before in his childhood, when he had sworn it at his mother's instance. "All the toil, all the lie, all the envy, all the bitterness and the humiliation, finished for me; all the glory, all the peace, all the fame, all the luxurious ease and the royal pride and the world-wide love, finished for you. After to-night we shall change parts, my proud, beautiful, caressed darling of women,—my careless Chandos of Clarencieux! Ah! what a thing is patience! it sits and weaves so long in the gloom futilely, but it traps at the last. There is only one thing wanting,—if you *would* surrender. But you die like the last Marquis, curse you! you die game through it all!"

Imperceptibly, one by one, the crowd thinned, and left the rooms that had so often and so long seen the most exclusive and the most superb entertainments of the time; they passed away, seeing nothing, dreaming nothing, of the fate that had fallen on the man who thus took his farewell of them, but speaking only, as their carriages rolled away, of the new genius that he had in-

roduced among them, and of the lavish and fantastic royalty of splendour with which his *fêtes* were always given. The murmur of the voices died away, the strains of the music ceased, the low subdued laughter sank to silence, the glittering throngs dispersed; they left him—his long-familiar friends, companions, and associates—never again to rally round their *roi gaillard*, never again to be summoned at his bidding.

He stood alone,—alone as he must ever be henceforth.

The perfect stillness followed strangely on the movement and melody and radiance of life that had all died out; a clock struck a mournful silvery chime upon the silence, the fall of the water splashed in the fountains; other sound there was none. The light from a million points fell on the clustering colours of the tropic flowers, the drooping fronds of the pale-green palms, the fair limbs of the statues, the deep glow of the paintings: he looked at these things, and knew that from this hour they would be his no more.

To-night for the last time they were his own; when the sun should rise, the fiat would go forth that would scatter them abroad to strangers' hands and enemies' spoil. Henceforth they and he would be divided,—the things that he had gathered and cherished would be scattered broadcast to whoever should choose to buy,—and under the roof that had known him so long his voice would be unheard, his face unseen, his name forgotten, his place behold him no more.

Far behind him, parted from him by an eternal gulf, lay the life of his past, which had been one glad and gorgeous revel, one cloudless and unthinking joy, and which he must now lay down, as the Discrowned whom the Prætorians summoned laid aside golden pomp, and

Tyrian purples, and brimming amphoræ, and dew-laden rose-crowns, and went out, unpitied, and alone, to die.

That sweet and cloudless life of his rich past!—to-night he was dethroned and driven out from it for ever; to-night, a living man, he knew all the desolation of death. and in the full glory of his youth was condemned to the anguish and the beggary of impoverished and stricken age.

To-night he was driven out to exile; and behind him closed for ever were the barred gates of his lost Eden.

## CHAPTER V.

### The Death of the Titan.

THE Duke of Castlemaine sat in his library in his mighty Abbey of Warburne, whither he had come by his physician's counsels. He was alone; for secretaries and chaplains and stewards were no companions for the superb old Titan of the Regency. His bright blue eyes, so fiery and so eloquent still, were looking outward at the tumbled mass of rock and moorland and giant forest-breadths that made the grandeur of Warburne; his head so stately, though white with eighty winters, was slightly bent; his thoughts were with dead days,—days when his voice rang through the House of Peers or wound its silky way to the hearts of women,—days when he could riot in the wildest orgies through the night, and dictate despatches on which the fate of Europe hung, with a clear brain and a calm pulse, when the morning rose,—days when he had loitered laughing over ladies' supper-tables with half a dozen duels on his hands, and looked in the soft eyes of cloistered Spaniards ere leading his cavalry to the charge,—days when his frame had been iron and his voice magic, when nations were guided by his will, and soft lips had been warm on his own,—days, in one word, of his Youth.

Though in extreme age, the Duke was a greater man

yet than those of this generation,—more powerful, more fearless, more full of fine wit, of stately courtesy, of haughty honour. He was of another breed, another creed, another age, than ours,—the age when men drank their brandy where we sip our claret, when men punished a lie with their sword where we pass it over in prudence, when disgrace was washed out with life where we bring it in court and make money of it, when if their morals were more openly lax their honour was more inexorably stringent, when if their revels were wilder their dealing was fairer, and when the same strength which made their orgies fiercer and their blow harder, made their eloquence loftier, their mettle higher, their wit keener, their courage brighter, than our own. And in his extreme grace the Titan was a Titan yet, dwarfing and paling those of weaklier stature and of more timorous breed. He sat there looking out at the brown moors, warm with the golden gorse; and he moved in surprise as the door opened, with a smile of pleasure lighting his eyes.

*"You! Has an earthquake swallowed the town?"*

Even as the first word was spoken, even as his first glance fell on Chandos, he knew vaguely but terribly that some calamity, vaster than his thoughts could compass, had fallen here, on the man whom he cared for as he cared for no other of his race. This was the only one of his blood who had his own code, his own creed,—the only one in whose companionship he heard the echoes of a long passed age; and he was proud of him, and built mighty hopes on him,—proud of his eminence, of his brilliance, of his successes, proud even of his personal grace and beauty.

Those who loved him as the old Duke loved saw a change on him more ghastly than though they had seen his face set in the colourless calm of sudden death.

Chandos sank down into a seat, and his head fell forward on his arms. The recklessness of desperation, the fever of utter hopelessness, had given him strength to pass through the ordeal of the night before: but here his strength broke down. He knew how the pride of the gallant old man had been centred in him; he suffered for the pain that he must deal, not less than for the misery he bore.

The Duke's mellow voice shook huskily:—

"Tell me in a word! I have never loved suspense."

Chandos did not lift his head; his answer came slowly dragged out, hoarse and faint from exhaustion, excitement, and long want of food and sleep; for he had tasted nothing from the hour that he had learned his fate, and his eyes had never closed.

"I *can* tell you in one word:—ruin!"

The Duke's hand trembled, making the diamonds flash and glitter on the enamel lid; it had never so trembled when it had shaken the dice, though a fortune hung on a throw, when it had lifted a pistol, though a life hung on the shot, when it had pointed to a serried square of Sout's picked troops, though an army hung on the charge.

"Ruin! A wide word. And for whom?" •

"For me."

"*You?*"

"Yes! It will amuse the world,—for a week at least. A long time for the absent to be remembered."

A deep oath sprang from the close-shut lips of the old Duke; his face grew white as the hoary silky hair that shaded it, and the diamonds shook and glittered in the tremor of his hand. But he loved the temper that made a jest even of a death-blow; he had seen much of it in his early day; he followed the lead with gallant endurance.

"Ruin for *you*? It is very sudden, is it not? Tell me more: tell me more."

His voice was very faint, but it was steady; he loved the man of whom he heard this thing with the generous love of an age that kept all the warmth and all the fire of his youth; yet they were both of the same school,—they both suppressed all sign of pain as shame. He heard; his head—the head of an Agamemnon—bowed; his hand closed convulsively on the Louis Quatorze toy; his breathing was quick and loud. Once alone he interrupted the recital; it was at Trevenna's name.

"That vile fellow!—I bade you beware of him. He hates you, Ernest."

"It may be. I have almost thought so since—since this. And yet he owes me much,—more than you know."

"Who hate us so remorselessly as those who owe us *anything*?"

"Then are men devils!"

"Most of them. Who doubts it? Did he ever owe you any grudge?"

"None,—only benefits."

"They are the less easily forgiven of the two. Had you any mistress whom this man loved?"

"Never, to my knowledge."

"But you may have had, unknown to you. Whatever for, he hates you, haunts you, envies you ruthlessly; hates you if only because his hands are large and coarse and yours are long and slender!"

"You make him knave and fool in one."

"The combination is not rare. But, pardon me, go on. I will hear more patiently."

He heard very patiently—heard to the end.

His head sank, his breathing grew fast and laboured, the veins swelled on his still fair broad brow, his giant

limbs trembled. It was the heaviest blow life had it in its power to deal him.

"Great God! if Philip Chandos had foreseen——"

His voice faltered; his listener stretched out his hand in an involuntary supplication. "In mercy spare me *that!* Do you think *I* have not remembered him?"

"I meant no reproach. You would have heard none from your father's lips. He loved you well; and though you have been improvident, you have not lost all. You have been true to your house: you have saved your honour. Pardon me, Ernest; your news has left me scarcely myself. But—but—must Clarencieux go?"

Where Chandos sat, in the gloom of the mullioned window, the shiver passed over him that had always come there at the name of his idolized inheritance. He could better have borne to part from wealth, and repute, and the love of the world, and the love of woman, than he could bear to part from Clarencieux.

"They say so."

"My God! and *we* cannot help you. Warburne is mortgaged to its pettiest farm. We—of the Plantagenet blood—are beggars! I would give my life to aid you, and I have nothing."

The confession broke from him so low that it barely was above his breath. It was very terrible to the great noble to know that in the dire extremity of the man he loved he could aid him no more than though he were the poorest peasant on his lands.

Chandos looked up; the unnatural coldness and fixity that had set upon the fairness of his face from the moment this calamity had fallen on him softened and changed; his lips trembled; he rose with a sudden impulse, and stooped over the chair, laying his hand tenderly on the old man's.



"Forgive me that I bring this shame and wretchedness upon you. I came here that you might learn it from no other first; not the least bitter of my memories has been the grief that I must entail on you."

The Duke's fingers grasped his hand close, and wrung it hard; no reproach, no rebuke, came from *him*; he could not have raised his voice more than he could have lifted his arm against Chandos in his suffering.

"Do not think of me; I shall live but little time to suffer anything. One question more. She who is to be your wife?"

Chandos moved from him into the shadow that was thrown darkly across the casement by the great cedar-boughs without.

"She is dead to *me*."

Another oath, loud and deep, rattled in his hearer's throat. The haughty patrician could have borne anything sooner than this—that one of his blood should be *for-saken*. Still, no recrimination escaped him; he never said, "*I warned you!*" The grand old pagan of a colossal age, hardened by long combat, and used to the proud supreme dominion of a great chieftainship through such long years of war and of state power, was more merciful to adversity than the young and delicate Lily Queen.

Silence fell between them.

The Duke sat with his white crest bowed and an unusual dimness over the brightness of his Plantagenet eyes; and every now and then the diamonds in the box he held shook with a quick tremor in the sunlight.

"What will you do?" he asked, suddenly, shading his glance with the enamelled box.

"Do!" echoed Chandos, wearily; it seemed to him that his life was ended. "What is there to do? Nothing: except—to end like the last Marquis. An axe on Tower

Hill was more dignified, but a dose of laudanum will be as rapid. It would make the best ending for the story for the clubs, and the sales will realize better if their interest be heightened by a suicide!"

The Duke looked hastily up, with that *fin sourire* with which, throughout his career, his Grace of Castlemaine had veiled every deep agitation.

"Well, you would have precedent. You would but do what Evelyn Chandos did after his master's death, you remember? Doubtless it would finish the melodrama well for the world. Still, were I you, I would not. I am an old soldier, and I confess I do not like *surrender*—to fortune or anything else. Your father died in the Commons like a gladiator; I should not like you to die in a ditch like a dog. They would not be meet companion-pictures. Besides, I do not wish to see your grave: I have seen so many!"

Calmly, dispassionately, the old soldier spoke, toying with his Bourbon box. None could have guessed the intense anxiety hidden under that courtly manner, the yearning emotion concealed under that serene smile. Once only his voice shook; he had seen the graves of so many—of the friends of his youth, of his brothers in council, of the comrades who had fought and fallen beside him, of the women who had lain in his bosom and smiled in his eyes—he had seen so many!

Chandos knew his meaning,—knew all that was veiled under the gracious courtesy, the gentle smile; those brief and tranquil words to him bore an unspeakable eloquence—an eloquence which moved him as no insult, no indignity, no adversity, had power to move him.

Where he stood, he bowed low, very low, till his head was stooped and his lips touched the aged noble's hand.

"You are right, and I thank you. Have no fear;

your words shall be remembered. Whatever my fate is, I will accept it and endure it."

The Duke looked upward at him.

"I am glad," he said, almost faintly. "*Contre fortune, bon cœur.* Pardon me if I intrude my counsels: it is the privilege of Nestors to prose. You go now. I shall see you again."

"Surely. Before I go, forgive me."

The Duke's eyes, so blue, so fiery still, dwelt on him with a great unuttered tenderness; and the tones that had used to ring like a clarion down the battle-fields were gentle as a woman's.

"I have nothing to forgive. Had you loved and served yourself as you have loved and served others, it would not be thus with you now."

Then they parted, never to meet again.

The old man sat listening to the last echo of his footsteps; then, with a slight sigh, he leaned back in his arm-chair, his hand relaxed its clasp upon the jewelled box, a weariness came over him new to his nerve of steel, a mist stole before his eyes, shutting from his sight the flickering leaves and the purple moorlands and all the light and movement of the forest-world.

The summer light quivered through innumerable boughs, young fawns played in the warmth, white clouds drifted over sunny skies, and a nest-bird above in the cedar's branches sang low and softly, as though not to break the rest of the sleeper within. And the Duke still leaned back in his ebony chair, with a slight smile about his lips, and the diamonds flashing in the box that was lying at his feet.

The golden day stole onward, the shadows lengthened, the birds sought their roost, and the young fawns their

couches; the peace of evening brooded on the earth, all things were at rest, and so was he; for he still sat there, motionless and with the jewels gleaming at his feet.

The sunset faded, and the twilight came, the purple haze upon the moorlands deepening to night. Still he sat there, while the shadows stole the brilliance from the diamonds and softly veiled his face, as though in reverence. And when some of his wide household, who were so nigh, yet whom he could not lift his hand to summon, dared to venture at length unbidden to his presence, they found him thus; and a great awe fell on them, and the hush of a breathless dread; for they knew that they were standing in the presence of Death.

The last of a race of Titans had died, as well became him, in silence and alone, without a sign, and with a smile upon his lips.

## CHAPTER VI.

“And the Spoilers came down.”

It was night at Clarencieux.

In the Greuze cabinet, Chandos leaned against the high carved marble of the mantel-piece; his chest was bowed as with the weight of age; he breathed heavily, and with each breath pain; his face was white as the sculpture he rested on, and set into that deadly calm which had never left him when in others' sight. The tidings of the Duke's death had reached him some days, and had filled up the measure of his anguish, adding to it the torture of a passionate regret, of an eternal remorse. He had loved the grand old man from whose fearless, fiery eyes no glance but one of kindness and of gentleness had looked on him from his earliest childhood; and he knew that the shock of his own ruin had slain the mighty strength of the old noble, if ever grief killed age.

He stood alone; his heart seemed numb and dead with misery; he gave no sign of emotion; no tears had ever come into his eyes since the hour in which his fate fell on him. The nights had passed pacing sleepless to and fro his chamber, or heavily drugged to rest with opium; the days had passed almost fasting, and in an apathy that awed those about him with a vague terror lest his end should be in the vacant gloom of madness. He was self-possessed, self-controlled; he answered tranquilly, he heard patiently; but there was that in this mechanical action, this unnatural serenity, that had a more horrible dread for those who saw him than all the ravings of delirium, all the passion of grief, could ever have had.

The door unclosed. John Trevenna entered.

"They are all here."

Chandos bent his head, and followed him out of the chamber. They who waited were his creditors.

In a day, with the rush of hell-hounds let out of leash, and as though at a given unanimous signal, his claimants had poured and pressed in on him, baying with one tongue for their one quarry,—money. He had bidden them all meet here, and they had come without one missing,—a strange gathering for the halls of Clarendieux, where kings had used to find their surest shelter, and courts had been entertained through Plantagenet and Elizabethan and Stuart days.

They were collected in the great banqueting-hall; a mob of more than a hundred men,—men who had come down on the same errand, in the same temper, sullen yet eager, defiant yet suspicious, savage yet audacious,—men who had no mercy on a dethroned royalty, and who had no sight save for the deficit they pushed to claim. Still even on them the solemn and venerable beauty of Clarendieux had a quieting spell. As they had entered, their

voices unconsciously had sunk lower, their gait involuntarily had grown less swaggering; and as they stood now, counting with greedy eyes the worth and magnificence of the banqueting-room, a silence had fallen on them.

"Feels a'most like a church," whispered one, a picture-dealer, as he looked down the vista of the double porphyry columns.

As he spoke, Chandos entered.

He bowed to them with a grave and courteous grace; all had their hats on, even those better bred, from the sense of scorn in which they held a debtor, and for the sake of vaunting and of claiming their own superiority. Involuntarily, as they saw him, they uncovered in respectful silence, the Jew Ignatius, who represented the bill-discounting firm, alone remaining the exception. Trevenna's eye had glanced at him as his hand went to his velvet cap, and his arm had dropped as though paralysed.

In the stillness Chandos advanced up the hall, his eyes resting unmoved on the strange and motley group that filled with their uncomely forms, and with almost every type of European nationality, the porphyry chamber where king and prince and peer had used to sit, his guests and his boon friends. There was not a murmur, not a whisper, raised; there was that in his look which held the coarsest, the greediest, the most pitiless, silent.

He stood beside the statue of his father, and turned towards them. He was at the upper end of the porphyry hall, and the multitude faced him in the glow of the lights that were illumined there.

"Gentlemen," he said, calmly, with a tremor in his voice, though it was faint as after long illness, "I have but a few words to say to you. You are here to enforce your claims. Of any one of those claims I was in ignorance a few days since, but I dispute none of them; the

improvidence of my life has left me no title to do so. You will doubt me, perhaps, when I say I never knew I owed a single debt; yet such is the truth."

There was a stir among the crowd, restless, pained, yet curious; they could not tell the meaning of this, yet they were stirred with a singular awe and wonder. One voice, the picture-dealer's, rough yet cordial, broke the silence:—

"We believe you! damned if we don't! You ha'n't got a face what lies!"

Chandos bent his head in silent acknowledgment.

"For the rest," he continued, still with that unchanged tranquillity, "I have but little to add. The amount of your claims on me is, in the aggregate, sufficient to wreck fortunes ten times larger than mine has been; yet, as I understand, you can be paid in full by my entire surrender of all that I possess. This surrender I make; my lawyers will explain its value better than I can do. I resign everything unconditionally to you; it has become no longer mine, but yours. I believe there will be enough to satisfy you to the uttermost farthing."

The murmur rose deeper and louder in the hall: the mass of men swayed together as though stirred by a universal impulse. They had come prepared to bully, to bluster, to demand, to enforce, and they were disarmed. Moreover, as he stood against the statue, they remembered the fame of Philip Chandos; the coarsest among them felt a pang of shame that his only son should be standing thus before them now.

They looked at one another; they could not comprehend this man who voluntarily came and laid down all his possessions at their feet, and yet in their own rough way they understood him; they would fain now have sympathised with him had they known how. The

picture-dealer—a rude, broad boar, who was worth near a million, and whose claims were the largest of any there, save the Jew's—pressed himself forward again, and spoke what all there felt, spoke with a genuine emotion in his harsh voice, with a mist before his sharp and eager eyes:—

“Sir, you’re a gentleman, and have behaved like one. We thank you, all on us. If we’d a’ known, we’d a’ waited,—ay, bless you, we would; but that a’n’t here nor there. Your father was a great man, but damned if I don’t think you’re a greater; and if there’s any little matter—any picter’, or that like—that you set particular store on, say the word, and it shall be kept for you, or I’ll know the reason why.”

“Spoke up right well, Caleb! hear, hear!” muttered another; and the applause was echoed and murmured down the whole body of the hall, till even the fashionable tradesmen, who had heard and had looked on supercilious and impassive, were moved by it, and joined it.

Chandos bowed his head again.

“I thank you for your good will, and for the belief you give me. I will leave you now. My men of business will conclude all arrangements with you, and my servants will bring you refreshments here. For your offer, there is nothing I would claim. I have said I give up all; but if there be any surplus left, I will ask you to do me the favour to sink it in an annuity for one who has been long dependent upon me, and whose health can never let him be as other men are: I mean the musician, Guido Lulli.”

A profound silence followed on his words,—the silence of supreme astonishment. He might have taken advantage of their offer to ask anything, and he thought only of providing for a foreign cripple!



Caleb, the dealer, broke the stillness as before, dashing his hat down on the mosaic with a stormy oath.

"I wore that hat afore you;—I'd sooner uncover to you than to all the kings. Lulli shall be took care of; I'll go bail for that."

Chandos turned with that royal grace which had made him the darling of courts, and could never leave him while he had life, and silently stretched out his hand—the delicate patrician hand which his foe had hated—to the rough, uncleanly, hairy palm of the dealer. Then, with a bow to the standing multitude, he passed out of the porphyry chamber; and they made way for their debtor as men make way for monarchs.

The Israelite Ignatius smothered a sigh in his patriarchal beard.

"Agostino was right. It is worse than murder!" he thought.

Trevenna ground his teeth, baffled even in the sweetness of his utter victory.

"Curse him! Do what you will, you can't *lower* him!" he mused.

Caleb, the dealer, stood curiously looking at and touching with a sort of wonder his own tough broad right hand.

"He shook it, he did," he murmured; "and they call him as proud as the devil. He warn't above taking it. Damn me if it shall ever do so much dirty work agen!"

A few hours later, Trevenna re-entered the Greuze cabinet.

Chandos sat alone before the still-opened window; there was even now no light, except the pale radiance of the moon, in which the fair women of the French painter

lost life and colour, and smiled a deathly smile. His head was drooped forward; his eyes fixed on the moonlit forest and river scenes beyond. In his hand was the tube of a great Eastern narghilé, and the smoke that curled from it was suffocating in its perfume; it was the smoke of opium. Thus, hour after hour of night or day, in solitude, he would sit and gaze out at the lands he had lost, and strive to steep his senses and his agony in the insensibility of the nicotine.

Trevenna called him by his name; he did not raise his head nor give a sign of knowledge; he sat, bent forward, looking dreamily out at the night-world of dew-laden grasses, and mighty forests bathed in starlight, and dark skies with wreathing mists of white summer vapour, and beyond all, the silver line of the calm sea.

Trevenna touched him on the shoulder; then he raised his eyes; there was in them so senseless, so sightless a look of intolerable pain, yet almost utter unconsciousness, while, dilated by the opiate, the pupils were twice their natural size, that the man who had pursued him might well have thought his pursuit would end in the chambers of a madhouse.

"Chandos, can't you hear me?"

"Hear!" he echoed wearily. "Shall I *never* have heard all? What more can there be?"

"What more? Then have you no heed as to what becomes of Clarendieux?"

Trevenna saw the shudder, which always passed over him at the name, shake him from head to foot.

"No heed? *I!*"

In the stifled words there was a piteous anguish that might have moved his torturer to mercy, were not the man who hates a blood-hound whom no death-struggles will sate till the last drop of life-blood has ebbed out.

"Well, it must go. The men are in a good mood; you have pleased them mightily; and it's a great pity when you had the offer that you didn't clinch it, and ask 'em straight off for the Clarencieux diamonds. I do believe you might have had them. Englishmen are such almighty fools when they once get soft and sentimental! Still, though they've taken such a fancy to you, they won't do without their money. Park Lane must go, and Clarencieux must go!"

"Why come to tell me this? You heard me. I gave them all."

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders.

"*Très-cher*, you did. It was just as well to give it them with a good grace, seeing that they would assuredly have taken it. But the point that concerns Clarencieux is, how will it go? It *may* go by private contract, if they're all of one mind,—which no set of Britons ever was yet; if not, it goes by public auction."

Chandos drew his breath with a sharp contraction. Despite the dull, heavy, half-drunk stupor of the opium, each one of these phrases quivered through him with a fearful force.

"And if it go by public auction, they will divide it."

"Divide it!"

The echoed words were hollow and inarticulate; a fresh misery faced him. He knew that he and his home must part, that strangers must rule in his father's heritage, and that the place he loved must see his face no more; but he had never thought that his heritage could be parcelled out and severed among the spoilers, and scattered north and south, east and west.

"Yes,—divided."

The certain vulgarity which had always underlaid the tone of Trevenna's manner, though his scholarly culture

had counterbalanced it, and his familiarity with good society almost effaced it, came out now almost unconsciously to himself, as he stood on the hearth, with the careless insolence of a coarse temper to adversity, and addressed, with a roughness he had never dared to use, the man who now had no power and no title in the home that had so long called him master.

"*You* won't be consulted; you know; it's theirs now, and of course they'll go the best way to work to make money by it. We can't help that: wish we could! It will bring most so, sold in lots. The Castle will go with the Home Park, of course; some millionaire will buy it, very likely, just as it stands, furniture, pictures, and all; or else, they say, it may be bought by Government for a new military hospital. I don't know about that myself; but some say so. The rest will go in lots; the forests will fetch no end for timber; those oaks and elms are worth any money for ship-building and railway carriages. The deer-park they'll turn into a sheep-walk, kill the herds, and drain the land; and all that waste part by the sea, so pretty to look at, you know, and worth just nothing at all for agriculture, they'll sell for building purposes. All that rock, and gorse, and moor, and pine-wood, will tell uncommonly well in an auctioneer's periods. The air's beautiful; the sea runs right up under the trees. It will take the public mightily as a bathing-place. I'll be bound in ten years' time villas will cover the whole sea-line, and hotels will be cropping up among the firs like mad. A company's sure to dart at it."

For his life he could not restrain the merciless jocularity; it was so delicious to him to stand there and parcel out by his words the magnificent demesne he had longed so savagely to see sold to the Egyptians and divided among the thieves, as the sons of Jacob longed to tear

the many-coloured coat in rags, and sell the favourite of Israel into bondage.

Chandos standing where he had risen, heard in silence.

"Best thing that can be done with it for you," went on Trevenna, standing at ease there, with his hands behind his back, and in his whole attitude the insolence of a coarse triumph more legibly spoken than he knew. "There *may* be a surplus if it sell well, and of course that will come to you. I don't think there can be much; but still something, ever so little, if it's only just as much as you used to give for an actress's bracelet, of course we shall be glad if we can save for you now. I suspect the building idea will be very profitable; there are always such a lot of builders ready to rush at a new place; and when the villas spring up like mushrooms, and the lodging-houses grow thick, I shouldn't be surprised if Claren-cieux beats Ventnor. By Jove! what would the last Marquis have said if he'd foreseen bricks and mortar invading his mighty Druidic woods?"

Still Chandos said nothing; his eyes never left their gaze at Trevenna, but there was rising in them darker and darker that look which the Hanoverian nobles had seen in the eyes of the last Marquis when he had sent them from his Tower cell, with a single syllable, like lashed curs.

"But what I came to ask you, my dear Chandos," pursued his tormentor, "was, What will you do? What is your future to be?"

Still no word of answer.

"You must do something," continued Trevenna, with a kick to the silver andirons. "You have not the worth of one of those firedogs now. You chose 'honour.' Now, honour don't give us bread and cheese. It's quite a patrician luxury, and I can assure you you'll never get

your salt out of it. There a'n't anything the world pays so badly; you see, there a'n't any demand for it! What's to be done? To be sure, you write; but now you're down in the world, I'm sadly afraid your books will go down in the world too, and I shouldn't be at all surprised if the critics find you immoral. They always do, unless a writer gives 'em good dinners; they always shy that stone, unless their hands are filled with a claret-jug. Besides, as Scott says, 'literature's a good crutch, but a sorry staff,' unless you cant in it; and I don't suppose you'd ever cant, not if you were living on a loaf in a garret?"

Still there was no answer to him; only the gleam in his dilated eyes grew blacker as Chandos heard.

"Literature, of course, you can turn back to," resumed Trevenna, too appreciative of the satisfaction he enjoyed, and too absorbed in his ingenuity at stretching every pulley, and turning every screw of the rack he had his prey stretched on, to note how dangerous a pastime he had chosen. "But I fear you won't be much able to write at present. Forgive me if I speak bluntly. I mean well. What remains? You can say with truth, if ever anybody could, 'I cannot work, to beg I am ashamed.' To be sure, the country—the Cabinet—would give you some post, perhaps, out of respect to the great minister's name; but, on my life, unless it's to choose pictures for the nation, or to preside over a competitive examination of pretty women for the palm of beauty, I don't know any public office for which you've trained! You're an Epicurean, and there's no room for Epicureans in these busy, practical days. Your pride, your pococurantism, your art-fancies, your fashionable caprices, were thought charming by the world, my dear Ernest, while you were rich and were its idol; but I am sadly afraid, now that you're a sold-up bankrupt, the world won't care to give

you back your very good dinners, and will tell you, like Job's friends, that the best thing you can do to please them is to 'curse God and die.'"

He had gone one step too far. As the lion-tamer amuses himself with goading and insulting the fallen monarch that lies chained before him, till he forgets that the desert-blood is still there, and in incautious insolence tampers and stings one moment too long, until the captive king, with a single leap, clears his barrier and breaks his bonds, and avenges his injuries with the old desert-might, so Trevenna had played for one moment too protracted with the man he tortured. With a spring light and long as a deer's, unerring and irresistible as a leopard's, Chandos threw himself on him, one hand grasping his shoulder, the other twisted tight in the linen at his throat, and silently, with a resistless force, strong as steel to clasp, thrust him downward across the painted cabinet towards the door, his height above the low square form of Trevenna like a Greek god's above a faun's.

"To-night at least this house is mine. If it were not that I have benefited you, you should not leave it with your life,—you traitor, who sold your friend!"

The door closed, barring him out. He rose livid with rage, and passionately bitter that in one moment of thoughtless self-indulgence he should have undone the caution and the acumen of so many years, and betrayed the carefully veiled secret of his hate. Yet, as he shook himself, jarred but unbruised by the fall on the yielding velvet carpets, he smiled in a contemptuous triumph, a compensative satisfaction: he had what life could never take from him,—his vengeance.

"The last exercise of your *droits de seigneur*, my beggared Lord of Clarencieux," he thought, content, though angered at himself. "You won't find any one put up with

your pride now. You are bitter; yes, I dare say you are bitter; but all your misery won't prevent this haughty castle going to the hammer, and one day or other you shall see *me* in it! When I do come, I'll light my first fire with my Lord Marquis's Kneller picture, and I'll build my kennels with the pounded dust of Philip Chandos' statue!"

## CHAPTER VII.

The Few who were Faithful.

THE morning came,—a beautiful summer morning, with its light on the sea, and its west wind blowing over the limitless blossoms of acres on acres of lilies-of-the-valley and of wild dog-roses that filled the forest-glades with fragrance and made their dewy couches for the deer and their perfumed shelter for the earth-nesting birds. The earliest rays glancing in to the painted cabinet found Chandos sitting there as he had sat all the night through; he had never stirred: now and then his head had sunk forward on his breast, and the sleep of the opiate had fallen on him for an hour, heavy, dreamless, merciful, in-somuch as it annihilated thought; at all other times he sat motionless, save once or twice when he drank off great floods of iced water or brimming draughts of brandy, looking outward at all he loved so passionately,—at all he had lost for ever.

With that single roused action towards his traitor, all revival of sense or movement seemed to have ebbed out again in him. He sat dulling his senses to insensibility with the nicotine, but never dulling with it the pangs that ate at his heart, as the vulture at Prometheus'.

He never noticed the rising of the day, he never saw the sun grow brighter and higher in the east; he knew



nothing; his eyes only fastened with a look that never left them on the sea and the woodland, and all the forest beauty that had been his so long, that never now would be his own again. Couched at his feet the dog Beau Sire lay, stirless through the day and night, lifting his head now and then with a low moan; the brute was faithful where the hand he had filled with gifts and benefits numberless as the sands of the sea had turned against him.

All was very still. Trevenna, with the creditors and lawyers, had left in the past night; the men whom they placed in charge had been enjoined to show the strictest respect for his privacy. The household were dumb and paralyzed with amazement and with grief; none of them dared venture near him. Nothing roused him from his stupor.

As the noon was high, and the sunlight without shadow across the breadths of grass-land in the hush in which the song-birds ceased, and even the busy wild pigeons rested on the wing, the slow sullen tramp of the steps of many men came on the stillness, echoing dully on the road of the western avenue that swept round by the western wing in which the Greuze room was. The solid, measured beating of the many feet did not awake him from his apathy of drugged unconsciousness; the noise of the irregular marching of varied steps as they crushed the ground beneath the woven boughs of the arched aisles of beech and chestnut did not reach his ear. The men came on to pass round the castle to the front; they were men of all ages and of different ranks, but well-nigh all of the same type, the type of the two classes of Old England whom she never hears the name of now:—the yeomen and the peasantry; the fair, florid, blue-eyed, broad-shouldered, bull-dog type of what were once her franklins and her eorlmen, that now—here and there

fast fading out—are still her tenant-farmers and her country cottagers, still reap her yellow harvests, and still live in the green shadow of her woods.

They came on very slowly, their heads bent, their heavy steps dragging with a weary, melancholy effort. They came as they had followed the bier of Philip Chandos, as they would have followed the funeral of his son.

They had learned that a worse thing than death had fallen on Clarencieux. They moved with a certain solemnity and dignity, rough and various as the men were in person and degree; for one emotion was upon them all, and a profound grief lent its sanctity, almost its majesty, to the weather-beaten faces on which the warmth of the early summer shone down through the leaves, and to the stalwart stature and the bent frames which were side by side as age and youth, as the tenant of thousands of acres and the peasant who lived in a shieling, advanced together in a long line up the double avenue.

At their head, walking alone, was a very old man of more than eighty-five years; his form gnarled and tough as one of the oaks of the deer-forest; his white hair on his shoulders like one of the patriarchs of Israel; his face tanned to a ruddy brown, that no near approach of death could pale. He leaned heavily on an elm staff, and the lines in his still-comely face were deep-set as though his own plough had riven them.

As they paced near, the loud swelling noise of their marching smote dully on the hushed noontide. At last it reached the ear of Chandos; he raised his head, heavy with the opium-fumes, and saw them. He knew them, every man of them; he had known them from the earliest moment when every creature on the broad lands of Clarencieux had striven with all the loving loyalty of feudal affection to do their best to please and to amuse

the golden-haired young child of the great house of Clarendieux.

"Oh, my God!" he moaned aloud; "and they must suffer too!"

Not alone could he bear his burden; not alone could his fate strike him; it would crush others in his fall, remove the landmark of the fatherless, drive out the old man from his life-long hearth, send the worn-out peasant from the cottage hearthstone that had been his so long, and fell the green, glad welcome of the forests that the fathers' fathers of the most aged there had known and loved as familiar and venerable things.

He had thought of them before, thought often of all who must suffer through him; of the retainers made homeless in their old age; of the tenants given over to hard hands; of the men who had lived on those lands from their birth, like their fathers before them, condemned to see their roof-trees sold before their sight, and to be driven across the western seas to seek new homes, when they had had no other wish save to be laid in peace beside their people in the familiar graves beneath their village spire. He had thought of them; no pain could make him selfish; but he had never thought of them as he thought now, when the three hundred south-countrymen who held his fiefs, large or small, came up in the noontide through the western avenue.

Involuntarily he rose; they saw him, and paused before the opened casement on the broad stretch of turf, all checkered with the shadows of the crossed branches. The oriels reached nearly to the ground; he was as much in their presence as though they had entered the building, and that which they came to say seemed best spoken under the summer freedom of the sky. With the same unanimous movement as his creditors, they uncovered to

a man, standing with as much reverence before the ruined bankrupt as they had stood before the Lord of Clarendieux. The sun shone clear upon his face, and at what they read there—the change so unutterable that a few days had sufficed to work—they were silenced with as unspeakable a horror. They knew then that this thing of which they had heard was true.

The old man who stood at their head advanced slightly. He was their spokesman, who had rented and farmed the greenest lands of Clarendieux, and had lived under the same broad thatch-roof as his ancestors had dwelt under since days beyond their memory, when the Chandos had been peers, and had marched with their brother barons to win at the sword's point the chartered liberties of England. He was a brave and staunch old patriarch, holding himself proudly as any Saxon thane, yet loyal to the house he loved, as the Chandos had been loyal to their Plantagenet kinsmen and to their Stuart kings.

He—by name Harold Gelart—stood forward, his white hair floating in the soft west wind.

"My lord" (the owner of Clarendieux had been their lord to all the yeomen on the lands since that forgotten, unforgiven day when the Hanover boor had slaughtered in cold blood their last Marquis), "my lord, is this thing true?"

Harold Gelart could not have put into clear words the shame and misery which he had heard had come to Clarendieux.

Chandos bowed his head.

The dense throng gathered under the leafy shadow of the elms moved with a shuddering, swaying motion. Against all witness they had disbelieved it till they should hear its utterance from his own lips. Its blow to him was scarcely less than was its blow to them.

The old farmer bent over his elm staff as though the shock that had been so deadly to him in the past night, smote him afresh.

"Will the lands be sold?"

His voice was hoarse, and panted slowly out, and he covered his face as he asked it. To him it was such unutterable shame, such insupportable disgrace, to speak such words to their beloved and honoured favourite.

Chandos bowed his assent once more.

Speech would not come to him, and none was needed as they looked upon his face.

They were strangely, terribly still,—that mass of toil-worn, air-freshened, stalwart men, whose strength could have wrecked Clarencieux from terrace to turret, had they hated its beauty with Trevenna's hate. What they heard might drive any or all of them out to new homes, might consign them to new and pitiless dealers, might level the homesteads they cherished, and might ruin them in many fatal and unlooked-for ways. But in this moment it was not of themselves they thought; it was for the great house that had fallen,—for the dispossessed lord who stood before them.

Harold Gelart, the oldest among them, and elected their ambassador, a man of few words, tough in his mould as any oak that stood the shock of the sea-storms, yet tender at heart as any sapling fresh in its first green leaf, lifted his head, while great drops welled slowly out of his aged eyes and down the sunburnt furrows of his face.

"If it had pleased the Almighty God to have laid me in my grave before this day!"

It was the only moan that escaped the brave old yeoman. The honour of his "lords" had been his honour, their fame his fame; loyalty to them had been one, in

his simple creed, with loyalty to his God; and though he knew not but that the old moated ivy-hidden grange, where he and his had dwelt so long in peace, might be sold above his head and new landlords eject him to find a fresh resting-place in his last years, no syllable would ever have escaped him to add a blow to the misery that had fallen upon Clarencieux.

Chandos looked at him, and at the crowd that gathered so mutely under the elms; and the icy, stony rigidity, the almost senseless stupor, which had been upon his features, changed and softened as it had done at the dead Duke's words. He had known those furrowed, bronzed faces ever since his youngest years; he had seen them gather round him in loyal attachment on every anniversary of his birth, at every return to his home, at every Christmas-tide that he had been among them. They were familiar to him as the venerable trees beneath which they stood; and he knew that they and he met for the last time.

"My friends," he said gently, "the worst that you can hear is true. You and I must part,—for ever. I hope that my fate may not recoil on you; but it is too likely you may suffer through me. I have been blind and mad. Forgive me that I thought too little of all I owed my heritage."

The words reached the farthest that stood on the outskirts of the throng, hollow and feeble though the once rich music of his tones was now. A single sound, like one deep, vast sob, shook the crowd as they heard. They loved him well for his own sake, for his father's sake, for the sake of his great name and race, that had been part and share of their own honour for so long.

Harold Gelart lifted his white head, like the head of a Saxon franklin, and spoke with the broad, marked

dialect of the southern sea-board steeping his words in its accent.

"My lord, we aren't here to reproach of you; you have done what you will with your own. We are come to tender you our loyalty, to say a few words to you, an' you will."

The old patriarch, whose life was spent amidst the woods and fields, whose rising and going to rest were with the larks of his corn-lands, found words with difficulty. His speech was ever laconic, and little above a peasant's; and the most silver-tongued orator would have found utterance hard under such grief as that he choked down now.

"Speak on," said Chandos, gently still. He knew that, bitterly as they tortured him, they came there out of love for him.

"My lord, it is just this,—no more," said the old man; while the broad provincialism of his county-tone gave a rough, imploring earnestness, beyond all oratory, to his words. "You tell us the lands must go; we have heard yesternight that a sore and wicked thing have be-fell you: it don't need to speak on it, it's too bitter in all our teeth; and them as has wrought it on you, may the vengeance of God overtake!"

Chandos stayed him with a gesture.

"No! to pray that were to call a curse on me. I but reap the harvest of my own utter madness."

Harold Gelart's eyes flashed with a fire that age could not wholly dim, and he struck his elm staff down into the turf with mighty force.

"Where be them that never warned you? Where be them that feasted at your cost? Where be them that knew all was rotting under you, and never spoke the

word that might have saved you in good time? Where be *them*? Let their guilt find them out!"

There was a rude grandeur in the passionate imprecation, as the old man raised his head and looked upward at Clarencieux, where the colossal walls towered above him, as though marking the vengeance of the great dead who had reigned there. Then he turned his eyes on Chandos.

"I ask pardon, my lord; I feel dazed-like with the misery! What we come to say to you is only this. We hear a power of money is wanted: if the money was forthcoming any other way, the lands would be safe? We fancy so; we don't know much; but we guess that. Now, we aren't rich men, none of us; but put together, we're worth summat. We've saved a good bit, most of us; and, clubbed together, it will make a bigger sum than may-be anybody'd think. Now, my lord, we don't mean no offence; we've lived under you and yours all our lives, and we love you like as if you was our king. Now, will you let us pay the money? We'll clear the lands, anyhow; we'll clear summat, at least as far as it'll go. We'll give every penny we can scrape together; and we'll bless you for using of it, as we used to bless your father's name when, let state and grandeur load him ever so, he never forgot *us*. Take it as we give it, right down with all our hearts; there a'n't a man among us but what would go content, and feed with his dogs, and fodder with his cattle, to know that he'd been of ever such a littlest bit of help in saving you and saving Clarencieux!"

Harold Gelart paused,—his voice shaken and stifled; the drops streaming unbidden, like a woman's, down his withered cheeks, in the passionate earnestness his errand lent him. Never, in all the years of his tough, sun-tanned, wind-beaten, healthy, vigorous life, had such a weakness been wrung from him.



From the yeomen and peasant-throng a murmur came such as that which the speech of the dealer had roused in the porphyry chamber, but louder, bolder, rough, and honest, with the simple warmth of those who gave it. It was the ratification by every man present of the words and of the offer of their spokesman. Every man there bent his head, as they bent it entering their woodland church: so, silently, they registered their adhesion to his promise.

Chandos stood and heard. A strange alteration passed over his face; all its frozen calm changed; for the first time since the night that he had learned his doom, the blood rushed back in a hot flush over his features; he quivered through all his frame, as if they had struck him some heavy-weighted physical blow. He was silent.

At his silence, the throng stretching far away under the elm-glades before him, serged nearer by one impulse; every unit of that swaying mass pressed forward to pledge his sincerity and the willingness of his gift, and from their throats, to a man, one shout broke:

"My lord! take it,—take it, and buy back the lands! What is ours is your'n!"

"Ay, ay!" swore the staunch old Gelart, while with his brown, horny hand he dashed back the salt from his lids. "And only just reckoning, too. What was your'n have been ever free to us in your days and in your forefathers'; no soul was ever pressed, no soul ever hungered, no soul ever pined, on these lands. What is ours is your'n."

Chandos was silent still. The change on his face grew softer, warmer, better, with each moment; the vacant lethargy of the opiate cleared more and more away from his senses; but his head was sunk upon his chest, and for the first time since his ruin had been known to him tears gathered in his eyes and fell slowly one by one.

The loyalty showed to him, moved him as insult and as anguish had had no power to do; the rain of those bitter tears saved him from madness.

He stood back in the shadow, so that his face was concealed from them; the weakness he could not for the instant control wrung his pride, and wrung his heart; with the warmer gratitude and emotion that their generous fealty brought him was blent the shameful misery that he—the last Chandos of Clarencieux—should ever stand thus before the tenants of his lands. Their love touched him with an intense pain that he should ever have tried and proved it thus.

They mistook his silence, and the movement with which he involuntarily drew back into the gloom of the Greuze chamber, for offence; and their spokesman, Gelart, pressed nearer, laying hold of the oak framework of the oriel.

"My lord, it sounds bold and coarse, may-be, as I puts it, for we to come bringing our money to you, but it a'n't *meant* so; we come out o' love and loyalty to you,—just out o' that. Your house have been our glory and our friend; we can't a-bear to see it fall and not to heave a shoulder to its prop. Leastways, my lord, if you'll just let us save the lands: we sha'n't be a-doing it for you; we shall only be let to save ourselves from new masters,—nothing more. The charity'll be to us."

The old yeoman was rude in speech and tough in fibre, but a true inherent delicacy lived in him for all that; he strove, as far as his powers could, to put the service they came to render in the guise of a service permitted them to aid themselves.

Chandos came forward, and took the old man's brown hands in his, and pressed them silently: words were very hard to him to utter then.

"My friends," he said, unsteadily, while his voice vibrated on the quiet of the sunny summer day, "thank you, I cannot; such service as you would render me is not to be recompensed by any gratitude. If I could take a debt from any man, I would take one from you. But were I to stoop so low as to rob you of your earnings to arrest my ruin, you would be right to deny that I could ever be the son of Philip Chandos."

A perplexed, piteous pain cast its shadow over the honest, ruddy faces upon which he looked: some perception of his meaning, some sense that could he take their offer he would be no longer what the men of his race had ever been, stole on them. They would have given their lives for him in that hour; and they had some faint knowledge that he was right,—that his acceptance of what they tendered, in all the cordial singleness of their hearts, would stain the man they came to save, more deeply than his calamity.

Old Gelart lifted his eyes.

"Master, master," he whispered, hoarsely, "it would be to save *his* name, *his* lands. I think he'd 'a' let us do it."

The yeoman had been of the same years with the great minister, and had loved and honoured him with all a vassal's feudal strength.

Chandos shivered at his words.

"No," he said, gently,—though in his voice there was an accent that pierced the hearts of the listening crowd. "I have dishonoured him enough: as I have sown so I reap: it must be so. Yet, because I refuse you, do not think me dead to all your love,—senseless to all your fidelity. We shall never meet again; but to my dying day I shall never forget you,—never cease to honour and to thank you."

A mighty sob, like the wrung-out moan of a giant,

shook the whole throng like one man. They had heard from his own voice the fiat of farewell; they had learned from his own lips that the doom of Clarencieux was sealed, that they and the race they honoured would be severed for evermore.

They looked upon his face in as eternal a parting as the strong, bold men who had dwelt upon his lands and fought under his standard, had looked upon the face of the last Marquis when he had ridden forth to join the rallying,—ridden forth never to return.

And they wept sorely, like women.

The length of the summer hours passed, the shadows of the clouds sweeping over the breezy uplands, the swathes of scythed grass, the golden gorse of the moors sloping to the sea, and the swelling woods of the deer-forests. A fairer day had never dawned and closed on Clarencieux. Far in the distance a white sail glided in the offing; the stags couched slumbering under the umbrageous shelter of the greenwood aisles; the brooks murmured their incessant song of joy, bubbling through the maiden-hair and beneath the wild-rose boughs: its beauty had never been more beautiful.

Like the youth whom the ancient Mexican world decked with roses, and led out in his loveliness in the light of the sun, ere the knife of the priestly slaughterer laid his dead limbs to be severed on the altar of sacrifice, the lands stretched smiling in the warmth, unshadowed by the doom that would dismember and destroy them.

To part from them for ever!—easier to lower the life best loved within the darkness of the grave, easier to lie down in the fulness of youth and die, easier to suffer all that the world can hold of suffering, than to leave the birthright every memory has hallowed, every thought cherished, every childhood's love endeared, every pride

and honour of manhood centred in, and the one mad ruin of an Esau's barter lost.

The night was down,—with the shine of the stars on the sea, and the call of the deer on the silence, with the grand woods bathed in dew, and the moorlands steeped in a hushing quiet; and with the night he must pass out from Clarencieux a self-exiled and self-beggared man. All through the day he had wandered in monotonous, almost unconscious action among the places that he loved; by the waves where they stretched under endless crests of rock, and below beetling walls of pine-topped granite; over the heather, blossoming on leagues on leagues of brown wet sand, where the grouse nested and the sea-swallow skimmed; through the dark, interminable aisles of oaks without a memory that could gauge their hoary age; through the rich, wild splendour of forest-growth, all melodious with birds and with the noise of babbling waters; by the side of lonely lakes belted in with leafy screens, under the shelter of towering headlands, all clothed with fern and pine, and with the fragrant wealth of linden-flowers and the clinging luxuriance of summer creepers; through them he wandered, almost insensibly, walking mile on mile without a sense of bodily fatigue, wearing out physical strength without a knowledge of its loss, beaten, strung, haggard, well-nigh lifeless, yet conscious of nothing save that he looked his last for ever on the place of his birth and his heritage.

It was near midnight when he reached his home in sheer exhaustion.

Of the flight of time, of the bodily suffering that racked his limbs, of the weakness upon him from want of food, he knew nothing: he only knew that before the next day dawned he must leave Clarencieux,—his own no more, but given over to the spoilers. All the familiar

things must pass from him, and be his no more. The trees that had shed their shade over his childish play would fall under the axe; the roof under which kings had sought covert from the men of his blood would know him no longer; strangers would sit by the hearth to which hunted princes had fled, knowing they were safer trusting in the honour of a Chandos than amidst the Guards of their lost throne-room. In the banqueting-hall, where his ancestors had gathered the chiefs of the nation, curious throngs would rush to stare and barter; the very marble that wore his father's semblance would be sold to whoever would buy; the very canvas from which his mother's eyes smiled on him, would pass away to hang on dealers' walls. In the place that had been sacred to his race none would pause to recall his name; in the heritage where his sovereignty had been absolute, his lightest word treasured, his idlest wish fulfilled, he would have no power to bid a dog be cared for, no right to arrest a hand that should be raised to tear down with laugh and jibe the records and the symbols of the honour of his house.

Through the years, however many, that his life should stretch to, never again could he lay his head under the roof that had sheltered his childhood's sleep; never again could his eyes look upon the things beloved so long; never again could his steps come here, where every rood was hallowed, and where no race but his race had ever yet reigned.

In that hour, nothing but his oath to the man who had bade him live on and meet his fate, whatever that fate should be, stood between him and a self-sought grave.

Death took the young, the fair, the well-beloved—O God! he thought, why would it pass him by? why would it leave him breath on his lips, strength in his limbs, consciousness in his brain, when all that was worth

living for was dead, when every pulse of existence through his veins was but a fresh pang?

It was long past midnight; all was very still. Through the opened casements came the lulling of the sea, and the faint, delicate murmur of leaves stirring in a windless air, moved only by the weight of their clinging dew or by a night-bird's wing. All in the vast building slept; all who loved him in the household had looked their last upon his face,—the face that most of them had known since the laugh of its childhood had been on it. The moonlight streamed in, clear and white and cold, through the unclosed windows; chamber opening on chamber stretched on and on in the spectral silver light; the hush of the grave rested on the mighty halls where white-crossed Crusaders had defiled, and houseless monarchs been sheltered, and revellers feasted in the king's name through many a night of wassail, and his own life of careless, cloudless pleasure, spent with so lavish a hand its golden moments. The quivering ashy gleam of the star-rays poured down the porphyry chamber, leaving deep breadths of gloom between the aisles of its columns, touching with a mournful light the drooping standards and the lost coronet of the last Marquis, shed full across Philip Chandos' statue, and leaving in its darkest shadow the motionless form of the exiled and beggared man by whose madness the honour had departed from their house.

Standing there before them,—those memorials of the dead,—he felt as though they drove him out, dishonoured, alien, accursed as any parricide. Through him had gone what had been dearer to them than life; through him had perished what they had trusted to him; through him their name must be tarnished by sneer, by scorn, worse yet, by pity; through him their might, their fame, their stainless heritage, were dragged in the dust and parted amidst

thieves. The crime of Orestes seemed scarce more of parricide than his crime.

Had not his oath held him, had not his word, pledged to one who now lay in his fresh grave, bound his arm powerless, in that hour he would have fallen, killed by his own hand, beneath his father's statue, where the moon touched with its brightest lustre the proud brow of the marble that stood there as though to bear witness against the wreck and shame of his ruined race, the desolation of his forsaken hearth.

The stillness of the after-midnight was unbroken; once the distant belling of a deer echoed over the park without: other sound there was none. He seemed alone with the dead he had dishonoured,—with the great dead whose memories he had shamed and whose treasures he had sold into bondage.

He looked at those lifeless symbols as though they were his judges and accusers: and a shuddering cry broke from him and moaned down the silence of the porphyry hall.

“Oh, God! I saved our honour!”

He felt as though he pleaded before their judgment-seat,—as though he called on them to bear with him in his agony, to be merciful to him in his misery.

He looked once more at all that he must leave for ever, then turned to pass out from the porphyry chamber. But the tension of his strength gave way; weakened by little food, and worn out by exhaustion, his limbs shook, his frame reeled; he swayed aside like a tree under the blows of an axe, and fell prone across the threshold,—the moonlight bathing him where he lay.

For hours he was stretched senseless there, the dog—the one friend faithful—crouched down by him in a sleepless guard. The night passed lingeringly; the flicker of the gentle leaves, or the soft rush of an owl's wing, the



only noise that stirred in it without. Now and then there was the sweeping beat of a flight of deer trooping across the sward that echoed from afar; once a nightingale sang her love-song with a music of passionate pain. There was no noise of life in the great forests without; there was none here in the moonlit banqueting-hall.

The wind freshened as the day drew near, blowing through the vastness of the forsaken chambers down the aisles of the porphyry columns: its cooler breath breathed on him and revived him; he stirred with a shuddering sigh. His limbs were stiff and paralysed; his blood seemed frozen; the warm air around felt chill as a tomb. He rose with difficulty, and dragged himself, like a man crippled with age, across the threshold that his steps should never re-pass. The faint light of the young day was breaking, and shed a colder, grayer hue on all its splendour, from which the white majesty of the sculpture rose, like a spectre keeping silent witness over the abandoned solitude.

Thus, with his head bowed, and in his step the slow, laborious, feeble effort of bodily prostration, he passed onward,—onward through all that never again could his eyes look upon, save in such remembrance as dreams lend to sleep, to mock the waking of despair,—onward through the mighty entrance-hall, in which the silence as of death reigned, where the steel tramp of the soldiers of the king had once re-echoed to its vaulted roof.

He looked back, in longing as agonised, in thirst as terrible, in yearning as speechless in its love as that with which eyes look backward to the bier in which all that made life worth its living to them lies sightless, senseless, and for ever lost. He looked back once,—in such a gaze as men upon the scaffold give to the fairness of earth and the brilliance of sunlight that they shall never gaze upon again. Then the doors closed on him with a hollow,

sullen sound; he was driven out to exile, and his place would know him no more.

## CHAPTER VIII.

*The Crowd in the Cour des Princes.*

WITH the day after his last entertainment, the ruin, so sudden and so vast, had been rumoured on the town.

Convulsed with amaze, aghast with indignation, indignant in incredulity, the world at first refused to believe it; persuaded of its truth, it went as nearly mad with excitement as so languid and polite a world could.

Well as he had entertained the world, he had never, on the whole, so richly banqueted it as now, when it could surfeit itself upon a calamity so astounding. It was grateful to all, which no good news could ever claim to be,—the story was so utterly undreamt of, so perfectly complete, without a flaw to make it less terrible, a loophole to make it less dark.

It burst upon the town like the bursting of a shell. In its first rumour it was utterly discredited. "Absurd! Had they not been at his ball last night? Had not every one seen him at the new opera? Ruined?—preposterous! He could never be ruined. They knew better."

Then, when the truth became indisputable, gossip-mongers quarrelled for it as a flock of street-sparrows quarrel for a crumb of bread; and the town felt virtuous and outraged. To have been led into offering such clouds of incense, year after year, to a man who all the while was on the eve of bankruptcy. Gourmets were in despair,—there would be no such dinners elsewhere; and club-wits were in paradise,—there could be no dearth of a topic. Ladies fainted with grief, and revived to wonder if his Limoges-ware would be sold, and wept their bright eyes

dim, to clear them again with eager speculation as to the fate of the Clarencieux diamonds; divided interests reigned together in their hearts: it was agonising, it was terrible; no one would ever give them such fêtes, but it was possible—all clouds have their silver lining—that the Chandos jewels perhaps might come into the market!

The Countess de la Vivarol set her delicate teeth as she heard of it.

"I hate him; I have my vengeance. I ought to rejoice," she thought; "and yet——" And yet in solitude her tears fell.

"He is ruined? Well, I have helped to do it," said Flora de l'Orme, with gay self-accusation.

"What a pity!" lamented Claire Rahel. "The art of opera-suppers will perish with him."

"There is an overruling Providence," sighed the worldly-holies; "his books are not fit to be read. Genius?—yes, no doubt; but what is genius without principle?"

"Died game," said a Guardsman. "By George, one saw nothing last night."

"Always eccentric," hinted a club-lounger. "A little mad, *I* think; and, on my word, it's the most charitable thing to suppose."

"Deceived us shamefully; acted most dishonourably," wept Lady Chesterton, to her allies. "My sister's peace is ruined for ever; indeed, I fear for her very life. But we may be thankful perhaps for even this terrible blow: it may have saved more. What happiness could she have looked for with a gambler, a libertine, a free-thinker, however brilliant his career?"

Two or three women—notably one beautiful Roman princess, with the splendour of Rome in her eyes—suffered passionately in their solitude, and thought, wearily push-

ing off their weighty hair from their brows, "*I* would have gone with him to his beggary."

For the rest, the world talked itself out of breath over its lost leader's fall, and picked the story of his calamity as a carrion picks the bones of the dead camel. It flavoured their white soups, was the choicest olives to their wines, spared them silent moments, let the dull seem witty if he brought a piquant addition to it, and gave a lulling morphine to the pangs of jealous vanity. The world was perfectly certain, of course, that the assertion of ignorance was merely a blind, and that they had been wittingly duped many years. A man run through a fine fortune without knowing it!—ridiculous! And the world began also, as Trevenna prophesied, to find out that "*Lucrece*" was very immoral.

Thus the babble busied itself over the wreck of a life, denying it even that sanctity of solitude which even barbarians have conceded to calamity, and exposing it far and wide in those pillories where no adversity can veil, no misery can hallow, no dignity beneath misfortune can avail to shield those once given over to the mercy of insatiate tongues.

They were shocked, grieved, horrified, most compassionately sympathetic, of course; but they were quite of opinion that the idol they had followed had been utterly worthless, and began to discuss with unanimous vivacity the chances of who would be most likely to secure the prize of that inimitable genius Dubosc. It was perhaps regarded as almost the cruellest stroke of the whole fearful affair when the fact oozed out that the celebrated *chef* alleged his spirit to be broken, and announced his intention of retiring for the rest of his days to a villa at Auteuil, there to devote his mind primarily in uninterrupted

study, to indite a work which should annihilate Brillat-Savarin, and become the eternal Libro d'Oro of gastronomists.

The world, altogether, was harshly treated. There was no scandal or crime in the story of ruin,—which omission rendered it curry without its cayenne; and the great coveted master—Dubosc—was lost to it. It could have lived without its late idol well enough, but it could not be reconciled to living without his cook. So it said one De Profundis over the virtually dead man, and turned to his sales, much as it would have turned from his tomb to his catalogues.

He was ruined, and they had been deceived; it was frightfully shocking, of course; but meanwhile the virtuosi felt curious about the Quercia terra-cottas and the Fragonard medallions, turf-men could not but congratulate each other that the famous Clarencieux strains would become public property; dilettanti thought of the superb Titians and exquisite Petits Maîtres they had envied so long; Pall Mall loungers rumoured of his cabinets of cigars, and epicures longed to read the catalogue of his Comet, his Regency, and his Imperial growth wines; whilst ladies comforted themselves for their darling's loss by projects for securing his Della Robbia ware, his Evangeliarium in conical letters, enriched with crystals *en cabochon*, his Cellini vases, or his Pompadour cabinets. He had amused them, no doubt, far more brilliantly than any other ever would do; but, since he was gone, it was as well to console themselves with his collections. Chandos before had entertained but his order; now he furnished entertainment for all the world.

When the palace-gates were opened in the raw grey of the morning, and the Poissardes rushed in, eager, envious, insatiate, devouring, filling the Cour des Princes, what matter to them that the privacy of Versailles had

never before been broken save by laughter and music, and the soft fall of women's steps and the glitter of a throng of nobles?—what matter that Calamity held the throne-room, that a mighty adversity had set its seal of sanctity upon the threshold? Like the Poissardes in the Cour des Princes, the crowds rushed to enjoy the ruin of the leader of fashion, and gave not one thought to the fate of the discrowned. His palaces were theirs to wreck and to burn as they would; they pillaged with both hands.

Moreover, as Philippe Egalité, if history bewray him not (which, sooth to say, it often does), took a latent pleasure in that rifling of his house, in that destruction of his order, and went up to see the crowd thronging through the dismantled palace-chambers with a smile on his lips, and his little cane swinging lightly between his fingers, to see the annihilation of the Eldest-born, to see the rooting up and trampling down of the White Lilies, even like Monseigneur d'Orléans, some there were of his own relatives, of his own rank, who came up to watch the spoliation, and to view the wreckers among the household treasures of the fallen man, with a certain sense of gratification, with a certain self-congratulatory remembrance that he had most inconveniently outshone them.

The comet was quenched in the blackness of darkness. Well, on the whole, the stars felt they showed better.

Then the papers, too, took up the theme, and embellished it in leaders and notes of the week, and the *Hyper-critic* recanted, and found the tone of "Lucrece" most unhealthy.

"*Dieu!* how droll an end to his royalty! It is horrible, and yet it's amusing," said Flora de l'Orme, casting herself down, on the day of the first view, on one of the couches in his own room, while strangers stared up at the

painted ceiling, tossed over his portfolios, appraised the *bric-à-brac*, wondered at the Daphne, and talked that the French sovereign had bought all the Old Masters. What Demi-Monde said openly, a higher and more delicate Monde thought secretly,—a point of coincidence common betwixt the two.

The world found it amusing, this discrowning and disrobing of its idol. His treasures were scattered far and wide; his favourite gems were numbered in lots; his pictures were borne from barren walls to hang under other roofs and in other lands; the Daphne was torn from her rose-hued shrine to pass to a Russian palace; the Danaïd was bought by an American fur-dealer to go to his mansion in the Fifth Avenue; the plate was bought by the great jewellers to be remelted; the Circassian girls were hired by a French duc; the Park Lane house was let to strangers,—new millionnaires of Melbourne-made fortunes,—who had the painted ceiling gilded over, the winter garden changed into a covered glass building for skittles, and the studio turned into a lumber-closet.

The world had followed him, worshipped him, caressed, quoted, courted, adored him; but when his catalogues closed, his interest for it had passed away. His closest friends were not altogether sorry to have his Titians in their galleries, his clarets in their cellars, the Clarencieux breed in their racing establishments, and to feel that one who had eclipsed them had passed out of sight. His ruin was a nine-days' wonder; then a peeress ran away with a famous Tenor, and usurped the attention of society. Women taught themselves a pretty blush when that shocking word "Lucrece" was spoken of; and men laid bets at evens that he had killed himself.

The world indeed felt that such an end for the tragedy

was due to it, especially as it had been acutely disappointed in the fate of Clarencieux.

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The summer days found Trevenna at the place that was lost for ever to the great race which had reigned there since the thrones of Rufus and Beauclerc. Ostensibly he was there in a self-imposed devotion to his ruined friend's interests, keeping watch and ward over the spoilers. Indeed, the world altogether gave Trevenna credit for behaving very admirably in the matter,—for showing an excellent spirit throughout. Society naturally could not doubt his regret for a man with whom he had dined almost every day of his life, and began to discover that he was a very sensible and very entertaining person: he spoke with so much good feeling and yet with so much just discrimination, of his friend's self-destruction.

It was thought, too, very delicate in him that, after the first shock of the town, he withdrew himself as much as possible to Clarencieux, to avoid hearing the misfortune discussed, and to guard, as far as he could, the conduct of the sales from dishonesty. Of course he had no power, as he said; still, if there were any residue, he should too gladly save it for his lost friend, though no one knew whither that friend had gone; and, at all events, it was as well to keep some note of the creditors' proceedings. In truth, in all his life Trevenna had never enjoyed himself so thoroughly.

To lounge through the porphyry chamber, with a bailiff eating his luncheon under the coronet of the last Marquis, to saunter through the portrait-gallery and hear dealers appraise the Lelys and the Lawrences, the Vandykes and the Jamesones, to ride through the forests and know they



would soon be felled as bare as a plateau, to feel his horse's hoofs sink into the rose and lilac heather-blooms and think how building lots would soon crush all that flower-fragrance out of sight, to look across from the deer-park over the sea and muse how the mighty herds would be driven out and dispersed, while scaffoldings of bathing-hotels would rise to front the waters where now no step stirred the ospreys and no sound scared the silver-gulls,—this was Trevenna's paradise,—the paradise he had set himself to gain ever since the oath he had sworn in his childish vengeance, standing in the streets of Westminster. Hannibal-like, he had sworn in his boyhood to sack the citadel of his foes; more fortunate than Hannibal, he had seen his Rome fall.

All the cruellest traces of ruin were those which brought him most closely home the unction of his success, the writing-table strewn just as the pen had last been thrown down; the studio, with the unfinished picture on the easel; the statues with their snow-white limbs smutched by the dirty fingers of appraisers; the treasures which had been the gift of monarchs noted down at their net value; the volumes that were the collections of centuries numbered and ticketed in lots; the rose-terraces, with all their luxuriance of blossom, their perfect sculpture, their summer sunlight, filled with the gathering of traders, Jews, and brokers:—these were the things that brought to him the full realisation of his uttermost desires.

“We should put the escutcheon up, and paint ‘Ichabod’ under it: the glory has gone from your house, my superb aristocrats!” thought he, as he lounged down the façade of the building; and, but that it would have looked a strange lament for his ruined friend, he could have enjoyed doing that bit of buffoonery himself. Like many men of strong will and indomitable endurance,—like

Cromwell and Napoleon, and Frederick,—he had a dash of the broad jester in him, a love of comic, farcical bathos; it enters largely into many of the most powerful characters. For sheer school-boy, devil-may-care love and zest in the devastation, he could have taken a brush himself and painted "Sic transit" on the white pedestal of the minister's statue; for he was very human in his Mephistophelism, and jovial, almost, in the old rich Hellenic sense in his animal spirits. Besides, he had worn a curb so long; it was a delicious sensation to be utterly free and utterly victorious.

A good many of those into whose hands Clarencieux had fallen had made their camp there for a day or so, whilst the valuation was being made. It was given over to many masters; it had none in especial. Trevenna took his quarters there unmolested. He was, of course, closely allied with the lawyers, familiar for years with the agents; and he had a pleasant way with him that made him welcome even to those whom ostensibly he came to inspect and control. He occupied the rooms Chandos had himself always used—that suite of the Greuze chambers looking out on the deer-park; and as he stretched his limbs on the bed, under the costly canopy of silk and lace and golden broideries, he could say to himself, what few ever can say, "I have accomplished the dreams of my youth." He did not say so, so poetically; but he thought, with a laugh of self-congratulation,—

"Which of us is the victor now?"

And deeper than that jesting triumph, more intense in exultation, more exhaustless in sovereign supremacy, was the sense in him of having struck down for ever the aristocrat he had hated, and of having alone, unaided, sheerly by force of his own masterly intelligence and his own matchless wit, pioneered himself into a road on

which he would distance the patrician he had so long and so futilely envied, and mount higher and higher, till he filled the void and ascended the throne from which he had flung down his rival.

Thought of remorse, touch of self-condemnation, there were none in him; he had hugged what he deemed his own wrong till he had learned to look on treachery as a legitimate shield, and on chicanery as a legitimate weapon. Moreover, he was of a bright, world-wise, unerring, unscrupulous strength of nature, that never succumbed to weakness and was never tainted by after-doubt.

That this nature was also one that no benefit could soften, no gratitude warm, was the most damning thing in the close-wrought steel of its formation.

The third day of his stay in the Greuze suite, he sat at dinner with the land-steward and one of the late lawyers of the ruined house. He was popular with business men of every class, though they sometimes shirked his pungent knowledge of them.

The confusion that reigned in the building pleased him; he would have liked to have seen the whole stripped and gutted by fire, if he could; he would have watched the leaping flames devour Clarencieux as the Romans watched them devour the fair palace-walls of the city of the Barca brood. The old servants who came to him, homeless, with tears running down their cheeks, thinking little of their own fortunes, but begging him to tell them if he knew aught of their beloved lord; the weary, dejected faces of the keepers and the tenants when he met them in the shadowy woods, the emotion with which strong men shook like women as they spoke of the master they had lost,—all these touched him not a whit. They angered him, because there was one throne from which he could not oust Chandos—the hearts of his

people; but they touched him not a second. And in like manner the desolation and confusion of the household pleased him; and he would rather have seen a broker cracking a bottle of rum at the ebony tables of the banqueting-room, than he would have sat there to be entertained with all the sovereigns of Christendom. He had never enjoyed himself more than as he leaned back in the Louis Quinze arm-chair that Chandos had used to occupy, puffed his smoke into the fair eyes of the French painter's women, and ate his cutlet off the gold plate with the arms of Clarencieux raised in bas-relief upon it, which would soon pass to a millionaire's ormolu buffet or be melted down in the silversmith's smelting-room.

As he sat there, the crash of wheels driven at a gallop ground the avenue-road beneath the windows; a carriage swept round and paused. Silence followed. "Is it Esau come back to look at his lost land?" thought Trevenna.

As the thought crossed him, the door of the Greuze cabinet was flung open, the Duc d'Orvåle strode in, his frank face flushed, his chestnut hair—just dashed with a white thread here and there—tossed back disordered, his hazel eyes aflame.

"Where is Chandos?"

His mellow voice rang out almost in the fierceness of a challenge. He entered without any of the ceremony customarily shown his rank, and without any of the formalities of greeting: "*le fou d'Orvåle*", as his world called him, disdained both ceremonies and formalities.

Trevenna rose and received him with that informal indifference with which (it was his best and highest point) he received a prince as unembarrassed as he would have done a sweep. Indeed, there was something grand and true in his intense democratic scorn for titular differences,

if he had not stifled his democracy when it was expedient, as he courted his hated aristocrats when it was lucrative.

"Where is Chandos?" repeated D'Orvâle, imperiously.

"Nobody knows, M. le Duc," returned Trevenna. "I suppose you will have heard——"

Philippe d'Orvâle stopped him with a passionate Parisian oath, and struck his right hand on the console by which he stood, till the room rang with the echo.

"Heard? Yes, I have heard. The news reached me in Russia. I have travelled night and day since, without stopping,—though till I reached England I believed the tale the blackest falsehood ever spawned. You do not *know* where he is gone?"

"Nobody does, I have said, M. le Duc," rejoined Trevenna, a little impatiently. He held the French prince in profound derision, as a man who, having the chance to rule half the continent had he chosen, spent all his substance on café-singers and posture-dancers. "He is gone, I am sorry to say; and the world expects him to send it a sensational suicide."

The brown eyes of Duc Philippe, so kindly and so full of gaiety and mirth at other times, grew full of ominous wrath; his colossal strength, that stood unimpaired all the wild excesses of his life, towered in the light against the violet hangings of the cabinet; he faced Trevenna with a superb disdain, mingled with the impatient grief that his face, mobile as a woman's and transparent as a child's, betrayed without disguise.

"What! what! Did every one forsake him in a single day?"

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders.

"Men are rats, monseigneur,—scurry towards a full granary, and scamper away from a rotting house. As for the forsaking, I don't know about that. He gave a

ball one night, and let the town hear next day he was all-but bankrupt; he made a present of everything to his creditors, and disappeared another night, God knows where. Now, a man who does that don't please society."

If Philippe d'Orvâle had doubted the fate that had befallen his friend, he could have doubted no longer when those words were spoken, under the roof of Clarencieux, by the man Chandos had protected, befriended, and benefited.

He shook with rage as he heard; the reckless and dissolute prince-Bohemian might have many vices, but he had not the most dastardly vice on earth: he had no desertion for the fallen.

"You were his debtor, sir; of course you are but a time-server!" he said, with the haughty contempt of the *Vieille Cour* on his fine lips, the noblesse spirit waking in him, utterly as it was accused of slumbering whilst he drank with buffo-singers, laughed with polichinelle-showmen, danced the mad *Rigolboche* and *Cancan* at the *Château Rouge*, and learned their *argot de la Halle* oyster-feasting with blooming *Poissardes*, in all his headlong Paris orgies. "It is true, then, all this accursed history that I hear in every mouth?"

"Only too true," said Trevenna, more gravely. He would have rather had any eyes upon him than those of this devil-may-care and dauntless noble, this eccentric and hare-brained original, this *bon enfant* of the *Coulisses* and the *Chaumière*, whom Europe had pronounced insane for inviting Barbary apes to breakfast; for he knew how Philippe d'Orvâle loved his friend. "Only too true, M. le Duc. Chandos has lost everything, and gone, no one knows whither; out of England, no doubt. It was very suddenly that the crash came at last,—though, of course, the extravagance of years had long led up to it."

Philippe d'Orvâle swung from him, and turned to the other men with the grand disdain with which he would have turned on to the Marseillaise swarming on the Terrasse des Feuillans, had he lived in the days of the Lilies.

"You were all the creatures of his bounty. Can you serve him no better way than by sitting drinking his wines in his chambers? Could he not be gone one hour before you carrion-crows came to pick your feast? Answer me in a word—What has been done to save him?"

"To save him!" echoed Trevenna, whose imperturbable nonchalance and good humour alone left him able to answer the sudden attack of the fiery Southern noble, which had paralyzed his companions. "Everything, M. le Duc, that tact and good sense could suggest. But you cannot dam up an avalanche once on its downward road: no mortal skill could arrest his ruin. It was far too vast, too complete."

Philippe d'Orvâle seemed as though he heard nothing; he stood there in his Herculean stature, with his fiery glance flashing on the men before him, his lips drawn into a close tight line under the chestnut shower of his beard. So only had they set once before, when he had seen a young girl struck and kicked by her owners on a winter's night outside the *guingette*, where he had been as a Pierrot to a *barrière* ball of *ouvriers* and *grisettes*; and the man who had beaten her till she moaned where she lay like a shot fawn, had been felled down in the snow by a single crashing stroke from the arm in whose veins ran the blood of French nobles who had charged with Godefroi de Bouillon, and died with Bayard, and fought at Ivry under the White Plume.

"What is left him?" he asked curtly. His breath came short and sharply drawn.

"Nothing, monseigneur."

Trevenna felt his hate rising against this haughty roysterer, this sobered reveller, who came to challenge the hopelessness and the completeness of the devastation he had wrought. He could not resist the malicious pleasure of standing there face to face with the aristocratically, the titled boon-companion of the ruined man, and dinning in his ear the total beggary that had fallen on his favourite and his friend.

"Nothing! Not a shilling!" he repeated, with the same relish with which a hound turns his tongue over his lips after a savoury, thirsty plunge of his fangs into the blood he is allowed to taste.

"'Nothing!' Is *this* place gone?"

"It is going by auction, M. le Duc."

The curt, caustic complacency of the answer was not to be restrained for all that prudence could suggest.

"Good God! what he has suffered!"

The words broke unconsciously from D'Orvâle's lips; he knew *how* he had suffered. In the moment he almost suffered as much. Duc Philippe was reckless, wayward, wasteful of the goods of the earth and the gifts of his brain, was eccentric to the verge of insanity, and fooled away his mature years in the follies of a Rochester, in the orgies of a Sheridan; but he had a generosity as wide and a heart as warm as the stretch of his Southern lands, as the light of his Southern suns. For a moment the grief on him had the mastery; then, shaking his hair as a lion shakes its tawny mane, he dashed his hand down again on the marble breadth of the console.

"Sold? By the heaven above us, never!"

Trevenna bowed with a tinge of ironic insolence of which he was scarcely aware himself.

"I would be happy if monseigneur could make his words good; but, unfortunately, creditors are stubborn



things. Clarencieux is no longer our poor friend's, but belongs to his claimants. It will be parcelled out by the auctioneer's hammer."

"*Never!*"

"With every respect, M. le Duc, for your very strong negative, I fear it is quite impossible that it can take effect. Clarencieux is doomed!"

D'Orvâle flashed his glance over him with that mute scorn which his grandfather had given to Sanson when he sauntered up the steps of the guillotine as calmly as he had gone through a minuet with Marie Antoinette or Lamballe.

"You triumph in your patron's adversity, sir. That is but inevitable: every jackal is content when the lion falls! By the God above us, I tell you Clarencieux shall *not* be bartered!"

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders.

"With every deference, M. le Duc, your language, though you *are* a prince, is not polite. With regard to Clarencieux——"

"It shall be mine."

The words were said as Philippe d'Orvâle could say such when he chose, with a dignity that none could have surpassed, with a sovereignty that sat finely on him in its negligent ease, with a force of will which now and then flashed out of his mad caprices and his fantastic vagaries, and showed what this man might have been had he so willed to lead the world instead of to be the hero of a night's wild masking, the king of a score of wine-cup rioters.

"Yours? Impossible!"

Trevenna was startled almost into self-betrayal of the thirst that was upon him for the dispersion and destruction of the lands of Clarencieux,—of the terror that seized

him lest, by some mischance, any portion of the bitterness of his fate should be spared to Chandos, any fragment of the home he had been exiled from be saved from ignominy and outrage.

"Impossible?" echoed Philippe d'Orvåle. "No one ever says the word to me!"

There was all the superb defiance of the old nobles of Versailles, all the disdainful omnipotence of the *ancien régime*, in the reply. When he would, he could exert his command as imperiously, as intolerantly, as any marshal of Louis Quinze.

"Indeed! I fear his creditors will say it."

Trevenna could pause neither for the courtesies of custom nor the ceremonies to rank; he could have killed, if a glance would have slain, this loathed French noble, who, with his seigneur's sympathies and his aristocrat's loyalty to his order and his friend, came to arrest the consummation of that unsurpassed edifice of vengeance which he had erected, at such labour and with such genius, to crush the might of Clarencieux and lie heavy above a suicide's grave.

A fierce oath, passionate as a tornado, broke from under the sweeping beard of Duc Philippe where he stood. But that his honour forbade him to strike a man whom his patrician pride could not have met and satisfied as his equal, he could have dashed Trevenna down on the hearth he insulted, with a single blow of his stalwart right hand.

"Say it?" he repeated. "By God, then, they shall *not*. What! Parcel his lands out among thieves? Let a broker be master here in his stead? Sell his home to some trader's new gold? Never, while there is life left in me! never, if my own castles are mortgaged over my head to get the money they ask! Where is your coun-

try's gratitude, that they let his father's memory go pawn? Where are all those he benefited, that there is not a voice lifted against such shame?"

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders. That this man was a prince and a millionaire whom he bearded he cared not two straws: he only remembered Philippe d'Orvâle as a madman with whose outrageous follies all Europe had rung; he only remembered him as one who clung to the idol the world had dethroned, and who threatened to tear down the topmost laurel-wreath with which his own hand had crowned his labour of vengeance.

"Monseigneur d'Orvâle," he said, with that malicious banter which Trevenna could no more hold back in his wrath than the leopard in his will hold back his claws, "if the country spent its money on every great man's extravagant scions, it would have some uncommonly uncomfortable legacies. It don't even pay its own debt; deuce take me if I can see why it should pay Chandos' because his father once was First Lord of its Treasury, and he has seen fit to squander as pretty a property as ever was made ducks and drakes of for pictures and dinners and women. As for those he benefited,—granted they're a good many, but if a lot of artists, and singers, and dancers, and shabby boys who think themselves Shakspeares, and bearded Bohemians who swig beer while they boast themselves Raphaels, were all to club together to help him with a shilling subscription, I don't suppose they'd manage to buy back much more than a shelf of his yellow French novels. I'm as sorry for him as you can be (you can't doubt my sincerity; I shall never get such good dinners); but I candidly confess I don't see, and can't see, why, just because he has been a fool and a spendthrift, a whole nation of sane people are bound

to rush to his rescue with their purses wide open. As he sowed, so he reaps; nobody can complain of that."

Duc Philippe shook in all his mighty limbs; and as he looked at the speaker planted there lightly, firmly, with his feet apart and the insolence of triumph irrepressibly spoken in his face and his attitude, he could have leaped forward like a staghound, and shaken all the life out of him with a single gripe. It was with a mighty effort that he kept the longing in.

"If *you* reap as you sow, M. Trevenna, you will have a fine harvest of woven hemp!" he said, curtly, in the depths of his brown beard, as he swung with an undisguised loathing from him, and turned towards the other men, who, mute with astonishment, and out of deference for the rank of the mad noble who had broken in on them thus, stood passive. "You are his men of business, are you not?—wreckers enriched by the flotsam and jetsam you save out of his shipwreck? Listen to me, then. Whoever they be, or however his creditors hold this place, it shall be mine. Whatever price they ask, whatever liabilities be on it, I will give them and I will discharge. Let them name the most extravagant their extortion can grasp at, it shall not be checked; I will meet it. I will buy Clarencieux as it is, from its turrets to its moorlands; do you hear? Not a tree shall be touched, not a picture be moved, not a stone be displaced. It shall be mine. And, hark you here: I offer them their own terms,—all their greed can crave or fancy; but tell them this, on the word of Philippe d'Orvâle, that if they do not part with it peaceably, if they do not send their hell-dogs out of its places and take the bidding I give them, I will so blast their names through Europe that their trade and their credit shall be gone for ever, and they shall perish in worse beggary than this that they have caused. Tell

them that,—Europe can let them know in what fashion I keep my oaths,—and with to-morrow make Clarencieux mine.”

The passionate words quivered out on the silence of the painted chamber, furious as a hound's bay, firm and ringing as an army's sound to assault. Then, without another syllable, Philippe d'Orvâle swung round and strode out of the cabinet, his lion eyes alight with a terrible menace, his lion's mane of hair tossed back. He had said enough. When once he roused from his wild masquerades and his headlong Bohemianism to use his leonine might and to vindicate his princely blood, there was not a man in all the breadth of the nations that ever dared say nay to the “Mad Duke.”

He saved Clarencieux,—saved it from being sundered in a thousand pieces and given over to the spoilers, though he could not save the honour of its house, the ruin of its race. The world was bitterly aggrieved,—it was deprived of so absorbing a theme, of so precious a prize; and Trevenna could have killed him.

The pyramid of his vengeance had risen so perfectly, step by step, without a flaw; it was unbearable to him that the one stone for its apex should be wanting, the one last line of the record of the triumphs engraved on it should be missing. He had swept all the herds away, leaving not one; it was unendurable to him that the last coveted ewe-lamb should alone have escaped him. He had destroyed Chandos utterly, hopelessly, body and soul, as he believed,—slain honour and genius and life in him, without a pause in his success. It was intolerable to him that the last drop should not crown the cup, that the green diadem of the Clarencieux woods should wreath its castle untouched, that the royalties of the exiled race should be left in sanctified solitude, in lieu of being flung out to the

crowds and parcelled among the Marseillaise in the desolated Courts of the Princes.

He had longed to see, had it been possible, the plough pass over the lands and the harrow rake out every trace of the banished race; he had longed to see, if he could, the flame of the culturer licking up all the beautiful, wild, useless wealth of heather and fern and forest lilies; he had longed to hear the hammers clang among the woodland stillness, to watch the oaks crash down under the axe, to behold the beauty crushed out under the iron roll and the timber scaffolding of the new speculators, to know that the very place and name and relics of the exiled lord were effaced and forgotten. Through Philippe d'Orvâle this last crowning luxury was denied.

Clarencieux, though he had driven from it the last of its race, escaped him,—escaped the indignity, the oblivion, the desecration, he had planned to heap on it; he had made its hearths desolate, but his arm was held back from the final blow with which he had planned to make them also dishonoured, and to raze their stones as though no fires had ever burned there,—till sheep should have grazed where kings had feasted, and wheat have waved where its dead rulers had their graves.

Through Philippe d'Orvâle it was denied him.

Thus, some were faithful to the fallen idol: the sun-browned men who toiled from dawn to evening among the seas of seeding grass and the yellow oceans of the swelling corn; the crippled dreamer whom his fellows thought an idiot that a child might lead; the reckless voluptuary, the prince-Bohemian, whom the world called a madman and vested with every vice that libertines can frame; the dog whom human reason disdains as a brute without speech:—those were faithful,—those only. But they were many, as the world stands.

The two who were deadliest against him, and chiefest without pity or mercy in his fall, were the man he had succoured with his friendship and his gold, and the woman he had loved and honoured.

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## BOOK THE FOURTH.

### CHAPTER I.

"Facilis Descensus Averni."

It was far past midnight in Paris; a chilly, bitter winter's night, in the turn of the going year; a night without stars, in which the snow drifted slowly down, and the homeless couched down shivering into a traitorous sleep,—a merciful sleep, from which they would wake no more,—an endless sleep, to be yearned for passionately when there can be no bread for the parching lips, if breath linger in them, no peace for the aching eyes, if they wake again to a world of want.

It was long past midnight in one of the gambling-dens which mock the law in the hidden darkness of their secret haunts,—the dens which no code will ever suppress, which no legislature will ever prevent. Where any vice is demanded, there will be the supply; let every shape of forbiddance be exercised as it may, in vain. Wherever men be hungered for their own ruin, there will be also those who bring their ruin to them.

This was one of the worst hells in Paris,—the worst in Europe. Men who dared venture nowhere else came here; men on whom the grasp of the law would be laid, were they seen, came here; men who, having exhausted

every form of riot and debauchery, had nothing left except the gamester's excitement, came here; it embraced them all, and finished the wreck that other ruin had begun. Other places allured with colour, with glitter, with enticing temptations: this had none of these; it allured with its own deadly charm alone, it made its trade terribly naked and avowed; it let men come and stake their lives, and raked the stake in, and went on without a pause; it was a pandemoniac paradise only for those already cursed.

It was hidden away in one of the foulest and most secret nests in Paris; its haunt was known to none save its frequenters, and none so frequented it save those whom some criminal brand or some desperate doom already had marked or claimed. Close at hand to it, in an outer chamber, were the hot drinks, the acrid wines, the absinthe, and the opiates that were drunk down by ashen lips and burning throats as though they were water; these alone broke the ceaseless tenor of the gambling; these alone shared with it the days and nights of those who plunged into the abyss it opened for them. Often all on through the dawn, and the noon, and the day, the flaring gas-jets of its burners would be kept alight: the crowd that filled its room would know nothing of time,—not know even that the sun had risen. The gay tumult of the summer life of Paris would be waking and shining on all around it in the clear light of the fresh hours; and still here where the sullen doors barred out all comers the gamesters would play on, play on, till they dropped down dead-drunk, or reeled insensible with want of food and drugs or nicotines. The Morgue had never owed so many visitants to any place as it had owed to this; the Bagne had never received so many desperadoes as it had received from here; the walls of Bicêtre had never been so filled



with raving brainless lives, as it had been filled with by the haunters of this den, hidden in the midst of curling crooked streets and crowding roofs, like a viper's nest under the swathes of grass.

Those who owned it were never known; the longest frequenter of its room never knew who the bank was; it was a secret profound, impenetrable,—guarded as closely as its own existence was guarded from the million eyes of the clairvoyant law. No one knew that in two or three superb hotels, with fine carriages, fine dinners, fine linen, with fashionable wives and blameless reputations, with a high name on the Bourse and a reception at the Tuileries, dwelt, in peace and plenty—the proprietors.

Does the world ever guess how a millionth part of the money that fills it is made? The world at large, never!

It was far past midnight in the hell; the gas-glare fell on the painted faces of unsexed women, and on the haggard brows of men who had played on here all through the day and played on through the night. The croupiers were relieved at intervals: the gamblers never moved; they hung there till the sheer physical powers of life gave way, and famine forced them from the tables; stirless and breathless, only at long intervals rending themselves from it to take the drugs and the stimulants that soddened their senses, they were riveted there by one universal, irresistible fascination. Features of every varied kind were seen in the gaudy flare of the gas; but they all wore the same look,—the thirsty, sleepless, intense look of ravenous excitement. It was not the polished serenity of fashionable kursaals, the impassive languor of aristocratic gaming-tables, the self-destruction, taken with a light word, of the salles of Baden, of Homburg, of Monaco; it was gambling in all its unreined fever, in all its naked exci-

tation, in all its headlong delirium, in all "its arid quest for wealth midst ruin."

There is a vast error in which the world believes,—that gamesters are moved by the lust of gain only, by the desire of greed, by the longings of avarice. It is not so; the money won, they toss it back without an instant's pause, to risk its loss at venture. Avarice is no part of the delirium which allures them with so exhaustless a fascination; the spell that binds them is the *hazard*. Give a gamester thousands, he cares for the gold only to purchase with it that delicious, feverish, intoxicating charm of chance. There is a delight in its agony, a sweetness in its insanity, a drunken, glorious intensity of *sensation* in its limitless swing between a prince's treasures and a beggar's death, which lends life a sense never known before,—rarely, indeed, once tasted, ever abandoned.

There was scarcely even a sound in the fatal place. Once now and then an oath, a blasphemy, or a shuddering gasping breath broke the charmed stillness, in which the click of the roulette-ball, the rattle of the dice, or the rapid monotone of the croupiers reigned otherwise alone. The room was crowded. Men who had grown old and gray and palsied waiting on the caprices of the colour,—men who had wasted on the framing of cabals intellects that might have rivalled Newton's or Descartes',—men who had consumed their youth in this madness, and, young yet, looked for nothing save a death in a hospital and a pauper's unowned grave,—men who had flung away high birth, high gifts, high chances, and came here to wear out the few last hours of dishonoured lives,—men with eyes in which the wasted genius of a mighty mind looked wistfully out through the bloodshot mists of a drunkard's sight,—men who had the trackers of turf-law or of social law in their trail, and, hiding for very life,

knew no nest surer than this foul one,—all these were here in the tawdry glitter of the flaring gas-jets. And there were women, too,—some young, some fearfully young,—loveless and rouged, and hacking bitter coughs, or laughing ghastly laughs, playing, playing, playing insatiate, with the thirsty, eager devilish glare aching in their painted eyes.

Among them stood Chandos.

The look which had set on his face the night that he had left Clarencieux had never left it; its glorious beauty survived the ravages of misery, the gaunt sleeplessness of a gamester's days, the wreck of all greater, better, higher things in him. Nothing could stamp it out utterly; but it had something more fearful than any one of the other faces crowded round them. It survived to show all that he had been,—to mark more utterly all he had become.

For he had fallen very low.

He had met calamity greatly; he had been tempted to sell his honour for passion's sake, and he had repulsed the temptation; he had been allured to evade justice, and secure comparative peace, by acting a lie to the world; he had refused, and had given up all, to remain with a stainless honesty and a conscience uncondemned. He had done these things with a sudden power of will, a sudden steel-knit strength of resolve, that had sprung in the instant of their need, giants full-armed, from the voluptuous unheeding indolence and indulgence of his life. But characters cannot change in a day; endurance may be forged hard in the flame of adversity, but it will give way many a time first, and melt and writhe and bend and break at last. When all had been done, all ended, all sacrificed, all lost, the force which had sustained him had broken down, the utter reaction followed.

The habits of his life had left him with no shield; the temper of his creeds had left him with no shelter, against the storm that had burst over him. His only knowledge had been how to enjoy; none had ever taught him how to suffer. A limitless indulgence had been the master of his existence, he had no comprehension of calamity. With latent greatness, he had dominant weakness; as the limbs that lie ever on couches of down are enervated and sinewless, so his nature that had basked ever in the warmth and the light of enjoyment, had no stamina to bear the crushing desolation that struck all from his hands at one blow.

In the moment of emergence, of temptation, he had risen equal to it, risen above it, and been great; in the darkness that followed, in the darkness in which he was driven out into exile, stripped, mocked, abandoned, left in beggared solitude, to drift to his grave as he would, he sank under the burden that he bore. A strong man might have gone down powerless under the accumulated anguish, the blasted devastation, of such a fate. He who had known nothing but the caress of fortune from his birth, he who had all the loathing of pain and of deformity of the Achæan nature, he who had never felt a desire unfulfilled, a command unaccomplished, he who had been pliant to frailty, yielding to effeminacy, could have no sustaining force to enable him to face and to contend with the destruction that smote him to the earth. All who had kissed his feet forsook him as though he were plague-stricken; there was little marvel that he forsook himself.

He seemed to walk like a blind man through a starless night; he had neither sight nor knowledge: all that was left to him was the consciousness of misery, the power to suffer; the power to endure was dead. He drifted sense-

lessly on, far on evil roads, far towards the murder in him of all that he had once been. He lived in infinite wretchedness, and the very memory of all better things died out in him. There is no arrest in a downward road. In the way of honour and honesty, and every holier thought and loftier effort, life piles obstacles breast high; but in descent there is no barrier, down the ice-slope there is no pause, till the broken limbs are dashed to pieces in the black crevasse below.

In the sheer instinct for covert in which the hunted animal unconsciously finds his lair, he had made his way to the safe solitude and secrecy of a great city. He shunned every sign, every sight, that could recall the world he had left to him, or him to it. The place of his refuge was known to none; it was hidden among the innumerable roofs of a close quarter; it was quitted only at night or in the earliest gray of the morning, and quitted then only for the gambling-dens. There was not a creature with him or near him that he had known or loved, save his dog. A burning fever consumed him at times; at all others he was sunk in a lethargy more dangerous for his reason than even the oblivion of opium-dreams. The loss of lands, of wealth, of power, he would have met with the courage of race and of manhood; it was the desertion of every creature he had aided, of every life he had loved, it was the Judas-betrayal of all he had trusted, that had killed all strength and all life in him.

He lived in intense wretchedness; the little gold he had on his person was not so much as he had spent on a woman's bracelet, on an hour's entertainment. The absolute fangs of want might be upon him in a single day. He who had feasted emperors more brilliantly than they reigned in their own courts, and who had only spoken a wish to have it fulfilled as by enchantment,

might any day want actually bread. Every thing around him, every thing touched or seen or heard, was such as would have been loathsome and unendurable to his voluptuous and fastidious habits a few short weeks before: yet these he was barely conscious of; he was lost in the stupefaction of a misery too great to have any other sense awake in it. Now and then he would glance with a shudder round the places to which he wandered; now and then he would turn sickening from the food offered him; more often all things passed him unnoted, and in his eyes there came gradually the lustreless dreamy vacancy which presages the rupture of the reason, the dulling of the brain. For hours he would lie prostrated. When he rose, it would only be to drag his limbs wearily out into the night, and go to the gaming-hells, where intoxication as sure, and even yet more deadly, was to be found, where alone he gained such gold as sufficed to keep life in him, and to give him a stake to cast again.

Strangely enough, the temptress favoured him. Hazard often allures her prey with that merciless mercy, and fills his hands only to hold him closer in her coils. He won enough to keep life in him,—such as life was now.

This was the issue to which his career had come; this was the fate to which he, who in his bright visionary childhood had vowed to rival in his nation's story the chivalrous honour of an Arthur's fame, had come; his pride trampled out, his genius drowned in drugs, his waking hours consumed in the gambler's delirium, almost all manhood slain in him. The Hebrew's thought was right: his enemy's work on him was worse than murder. It was a terrible abasement, a terrible surrender; it was frailty, cowardice, suicide; but the storm had beaten down on his once proud head till it hung in a slave's shame.

Existence had grown so hideous to him that he sunk beneath its ceaseless torture, longing alone for death.

Those who have from early years been tried in the fires of affliction may grow the sterner, firmer, more highly tempered for it, like the wrought steel; but those to whom it has been wholly unknown in the soft sensuousness of a joyous life, stagger and fall swooning at the first intolerable breath of its blasting furnace.

Chandos stood now amidst the crowd about the play-tables, in companionship with much of all that was worst and most desperate in Paris. He did not know them; he scarcely knew how vile the character of many round him was. His license had been the license of a graceful Catullus; his sins had been the soft sins of an elegant Sardanapalus; he knew nothing of the ignominy of great cities; he knew nothing of the coarse criminality of such as those who harboured and gambled here. He had strayed to its haunt by chance; he returned again and again for the sake of its secrecy, its opium-drugged wines, its reckless play. He had no knowledge of the companions with whom he was thrown; he was too utterly lost in his own misery to note or to loathe them, whilst they looked on, half awed, half curious, at one whom all Paris knew by name and sight, whose history all knew also, as he came among them day after day, night after night, with that deathless beauty, that inextinguishable grace left in him, as they were left in the slaughtered body of Alcibiades, to show how royal a blood had run in his veins, how mighty, how majestic, how hopeless a wreck was there.

Once one of them touched his arm,—a young girl, not twenty.

"Why are you here? You are as beautiful as a god! You are not like us—yet."

He looked at her with a dull vacancy, and answered nothing, as he filled a glass with brandy. She thrust the opiate he had mixed with it back to his hand.

"Drink enough to kill yourself *at once*. Don't live to be what you will be. Such as you go to a madhouse."

Her words dreamily pierced through the semi-insensibility of his brain: he set the opiate down undrunk,—for that once. He thought of the dead man who had bade him meet his fate, whatever his fate became; but the next moment he was again at the gaming-table, the next moment only its mad tempting was remembered.

He never heeded what he won, what he lost, though he knew that the very food of the next day hung in the hazard; he would have blessed the famine that should have killed him. But he had the gamester's instinct in him; the gamester's peril alone gave him an oblivious intoxication; he never left it, except when he wandered out to some sleeping-place and flung himself down to sleep, well-nigh as lifelessly as the dead sleep, hours, perhaps days through.

So months had gone with him. The splendid strength and stamina of his frame resisted the ravages that were consuming them; but what was worse than the body perished: the mind decayed, swiftly, surely.

The golden summer, the ruddy autumn, the bitterness of early winter, had passed; he noted no change of seasons; night and day were alike to him; he only dully wondered how long life would curse him by leaving its throb in his heart, the breath in his lips.

He had played thirty-six hours now at a stretch, among the painted women and the haggard men who filled this pandemonium. He had played on till he had lost all,—the only time that he had ever done so, the last franc was staked and swept away. He stood blankly



gazing down at the tables; he felt that the means of gaining the one intoxication that was precious to him was gone, he had no remembrance that it turned him on the streets a beggar. The eager throngs, seeing the card pass without his stake being laid on it, pushed fiercely, ravenously, to get his nearer place. He let them take it, moving as a somnambulist, and made his way out down the staircase and through the low, masked side door that alone lent admittance to the gambling-rooms: the face of the house was merely a fruiterer's and a tobacconist's shops. He went out mechanically; he knew he must get more gold or go without this, which had become the single craving necessity of life. Where? He who had owned the aristocracies of whole nations as his friends, and had given to all who asked, as though the world were his, had not a shilling now to get him bread.

He walked on aimlessly, unheeding the snow which poured down on his bare head, the cutting north wind that blew like an ice-blast. It was between three and four in the morning; there was scarce a soul abroad. In the quarter where he was few carriages ever rolled, and the thieves and revellers who filled it were mostly housed in some den or another in the inclement weather. The dog followed him closely; otherwise he was almost alone in the tortuous, endless streets, whose windings he took without knowing whither they led him. The bitter rush of the wind lifted the masses of his hair, the sleet drove in his eyes, the cold chilled him to the bone; he was adrift in the streets of Paris, without a sou to get him food or bed,—he who a few months before had reigned there in a splendour passing the splendour of princes!

He longed for death,—longed as never man yet longed for life. The unspeakable physical misery alone passed his strength; to the nerves that had shrunk from

pain, to the senses that had been steeped in every pleasure, to the tastes that had loathed unsightliness as a torture, to the habits that had been enervated in all the richness of enjoyment, the wretchedness that was now his portion was horrible beyond the utterance. He who had never known what an hour's suffering, what a moment's denial, were, now endured cold, and exposure, and need of food, and all the racking pangs of want and fever, like any houseless beggar starving in the night.

He wandered on and on,—still always in the same quarter, still always keeping, by sheer instinct, far from all that he had once known,—far from all that had so lately seen him in the magnificence of his reign. He wandered on, under the lowering walls of pent-up dwellings, through the driving of the slowly-falling snow, against the cutting breath of the ice-chill air. A strange faintness stole on him, a strange numbness seized his limbs; he began to lose all sense of the keen blasts that blew against him; the intensity of cold began to yield place to a dreamy exhaustion and prostration, half weary, half soothing: he felt sleep stealing on him,—deep as death. He had no wish to resist, no power to overcome it; the languor stole over all his frame, his limbs failed him; he sank down and stretched himself out as on some welcome bed, with a heavy sigh, lying there on the snow-covered ground, with the snow falling on his closed eyes and the wind winding among his hair. The dog couched down and pressed its silky warmth against his breast; profound rest stole on him: he knew no more.

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## CHAPTER II.

"Where all Life dies, Death lives."

THERE was intense solitude in the dark, cheerless night; the snow drifted noiseless down; now and then the wild winds broke and howled with a hollow moan: all else was very still,—still as the starless, ink-black skies that bent above. One shadow alone moved through the gloom that a yellow lamp-light here and there only served to make more impenetrable,—a shadow frail, bent, delicate as a woman's, feeble as that of age,—the shadow of a cripple.

He dragged himself along with slow and painful effort; when he passed under one of the lamps, its glare shone on a face fair and spiritual, with great dark dreaming eyes, that looked out at the snow-flakes wearily,—the face of Guido Lulli. The fragile, helpless, pain-worn Provençal, who shuddered from cold as a young fawn will shudder in it, and who had barely till now quitted the chamber where he wove his melodious fancies and forgot a world with which he could have no share, was out in the bitterness of the winter's night, on a quest that his fidelity had never slackened in through many months of vain toil and fruitless search. The search was ended now.

His foot touched the outflung arm of the form that lay prostrate, half on the stone of the steps on which it had sunk, half on the road to which the limbs had been stretched in the strange peace and languor which had come with the slumber of cold and fasting.

The snow had fallen faster and heavily in the last few moments; it covered the hands, and was shed white

and thick upon the uncovered hair and upturned brow. A lamp burned just above; its flicker, glowing dully through the raw gray mist, shone on the death-like calm of the features in the breathless rest of sleep from which few ever awaken. Lulli stooped and looked; then, with a great cry, sank down on his knees beside the senseless form. He knew it in a glance, all changed though it was; his search was over.

The dog lifted his head and gave a moaning of recognition, half of joy, half of entreaty; but he would not stir from where he crouched on his master's breast, lending with his warm breath and his curly hair and his massive strength, such aid and protection as he could against the blasts of the storm and the chills of the night. If any life lingered, he had saved it.

Lulli raised his voice in a shout for aid; helpless and weak as he was in all actions for himself, loyalty and gratitude gave him the strength of giants to save the man who in his own extremity had saved him.

There was no answer to his call. He was alone in the bleakness and the darkness of the wintry dawn, with one whom he firmly believed to be dying,—dying of cold, of exposure, and of want; the man whom but a year before he had known in every luxury and every pleasure that the world could give,—the man who had come to him in the summer-heats of Spain as the saviour of his life and art, who had seemed to him the very incarnation of beauty, of joy, of splendid manhood, of proud, rejoicing, perfect strength.

The roll of a carriage coming slowly, and muffled on the whitened roads, smote on his ear at last; he raised a louder cry, with all the power he could gather. He heard a woman's voice from the interior bid the coachman stop and wait. In the dull gleam of the lamp he could see

the glitter of jewels flash as she leaned out; her words came strangely clear to him through the frosty darkness, as she asked, in French,—

"What is it?"

"One dying,—and from cold!"

"Dying! Wait while I see," said the voice he had heard, as the form he could dimly perceive through the gloom swayed from the carriage-steps and came towards him; a woman who had been, who indeed was still, very lovely; a woman whose youth was waning, but who still was young; a woman in rich costly draperies that the yellow light glittered on, and with the blue gleam of sapphires above her brow. She was Beatrix Lennox.

A moment, and she stood beside Lulli, disregarding the snow-flakes that drove against her, and the icy wind that blew through her scarlet cashmeres. She was a woman of swift impulse, of warm pity.

"Is he dying, you say?" she asked, with an infinite gentleness in her voice, while she stooped to look at the prostrate form. She started with a loud cry.

"Chandos!—merciful Heaven!"

Her lips turned very pale. Her voice trembled.

"Oh, Heaven, what a wreck! I have seen so many, yet never one like this!"

She was silent a moment, gazing down at the senseless features, and softly touching, with a caressing hand, the dead gold of the hair, all wet and whitened by the driving of the snow. Then she turned with a nervous energy; she was impetuous and rapid, and firm in act.

"He is not dead," she said, impatiently; "but he will die if he stay there. Lift him into my carriage, quick! We must get him warmth and stimulants; my house is so far off, and there is no fit place here——"

"My lodging is not distant. Let him come there,"

pleaded Lulli, piteously, while he drew the inanimate hands closer into his own, as though afraid he should be robbed again of the one so long lost, so terribly found.

"Yes, yes; anywhere that is near!" she answered, rapidly, while she flung the scarlet down-lined draperies she wore about the half-dead limbs, and stood, regardless of the blasts that howled, and of the heavy icy mists that descended on the earth like sheets of solid water, as her servants, at her bidding, raised him and laid him gently down upon the cushions of her carriage. She felt nothing of the searching wind, nothing of the drenching storm, nothing of the flakes that were driven against her delicate skin and her masked-ball dress. Her eyes were dim with tears; her lips shook; her heart ached.

"How many fallen I have seen!" her thoughts ran; "yet never such a fall as his."

When life and sense returned to Chandos, he was stretched before a wood fire, that shed its ruddy, uncertain light over a darkened room; the dog was licking his hands and murmuring its love over him where he lay; and beside him, watching him, were the musician and the richly-hued and delicate form of Beatrix Lennox.

"Clarencieux?" he muttered, dreamily. It was the one loss ever at his heart, the one name ever in his thoughts.

It struck those who heard it with a pang; they knew how endless must be this longing, how endless this loss.

Lulli stooped over him, his voice very broken.

"Monseigneur, do you not know me?"

Chandos looked at him dreamily, blindly. His head fell back with a sigh of weariness.

"No, no; if you had been merciful, you would have let me die."

The words told his listeners more mournfully, more

utterly, than any others could have done, how bitter to him had become the burden of the life once so rich and gracious.

Beatrix Lennox, albeit a woman who had known the world in phases that harden and chill and fill with an ironic mockery for most emotions, those who do so know it, looked on at him, where he lay, with eyes of pathetic pain, dim and aching with unshed tears. She had seen him but so late in all the glory of his kingly manhood, of his unshadowed youth!

Lulli, his voice broken with the weeping that shook him like a young child, stooped over him, passionately praying for his recognition.

"Monseigneur! my master, my friend, my saviour! look at me; you know me?"

The long-familiar tones reached the brain, dulled by cold and want of food.

Chandos lifted his eyelids, laden still with the sleep that had been so nearly the sleep of death, and saw Beatrix Lennox. He remembered them both then, and, in the old instincts of his courtesy to women, strove to rise. With an effort he staggered to his feet, and leaned heavily against the high slate shelf above the warm wood-piled blazing hearth. He could not speak; the sight of these two faces so well known in his past—that past which seemed severed from him as by the gulf of a lifetime—brought back with a flood of memories on his slowly waking thoughts what he had been, what he was. They, looking on him and seeing the ruin a few months had wrought, did not know how vast, how terrible the change was in him more utterly than he himself.

His eyes closed involuntarily with a shudder. He had buried his life in the dens of the populous city to escape sight of all those once familiar to and with him. That

any of those should meet him now was torture almost unbearable to the pride which survived in him above all that had sought to shame and stay it.

"How do I come here?" he said, feebly, while his gaze wandered towards them with the pathetic glance of a man paralyzed, whose eyes alone can speak.

"The cold had struck you, and you had fallen," answered Beatrix Lennox, in her voice that fell on him like soothing music. "My carriage was near; we brought you to M. Lulli's room. You are weak still; the night was so bitter. Wait and rest before you speak."

She restrained the tears that choked her utterance; for, with the tact that nature gave her, she divined how fearful must be to him the knowledge that they had found him in his destitution and his suffering,—they, who had been the companions of his glittering prosperity, the one the recipient of his widest charity, the other the guest of his gayest hours. She sought to hide her own knowledge of it as she could.

Lulli could exercise no such self-restraint; he knelt at Chandos' feet, his head bowed in his hands, his heart half broken.

"Oh, monseigneur," he murmured, passionately, piteously, "how have I searched for you! how have I grieved for you! I sought you night and day,—sought you living or dead. Could you not have trusted *me*? Could you not have let *me* go out with you to your exile?"

Chandos looked down on him.

"Forgive me, Lulli, I forgot *you* would be faithful."

"You never forgot!" cried the musician, lifting his head eagerly, while he flung back the silky masses of his dark hair off his eyes. "You never forgot me; you only forgot yourself! You remembered my needs, you remembered my helplessness, you remembered to save me



and serve me to the last: all you forgot was how I loved you!"

Chandos stretched out his hand to him with his old gesture; he could not answer, the Provençal's fidelity moved him too deeply, stirred him too bitterly, in its contrast with the abandonment of well-nigh every other.

Beatrice Lennox drew nearer, and laid her hand softly on his arm.

"You were very near death an hour ago. Rest now, and take what I bring you."

With the skill and the speed of her sex, she brought him with her own hands some food and some warm and fragrant coffee, standing there in her masquerade-dress all glittering with Venetian gems and Venetian grace, with the ruddy wood-fire light upon her, as she had stood in the driving down-pour of the snow-storm. The hand that held him the food so tenderly had but just laid aside the black coquette Venetian mask of her opera-ball; but of a surety the ministration was not less gentle, the heart that prompted it not less full of divine charity, than if it had just cast aside the gray serge of a religious recluse.

It was the first food for months from which he had not turned in loathing; he took it with a gratitude that, though his eyes alone spoke, sank into her memory for ever. She saw, what Lulli did not see, that it was the first he had taken for many hours, and that long fasting had done its work on him not less surely than the winter night.

"Can he want bread?" she thought, with a quiver of horror. Heartless though the world called her, this *reine gaillarde* of a lawless court, she would have gone and sold her jewels and her cashmeres to bring him gold, had she not known by instinct that, though he might die of hunger, he would never take an alms.

"I owe you a great debt, Mrs. Lennox," he said, simply, as his eyes rested on her, all the light dead in them, a heavy languor weighing down their lids, and a haggard darkness circling them, but with their weariness, a look of infinite thankfulness to her and to the one man who alone had never forsaken and reviled his memory.

"You owe me none." The words were very low, as she stood swaying to and fro the gold strings of her Venetian mask. "I owed you some time ago a far greater one."

"Owed me?"

His senses and his memory were still dim; warmth and, with warmth, life were fast flowing back into his veins, but he felt as one in a dream; the faces he looked on were so familiar, the place was so strange, he could not disentangle fact from fantasy.

"Yes!"

She came closer towards him, standing there in the reflection of the blazing wood, with the scarlet and black folds of her masquerade-dress sweeping downward in the glow, and her haughty, handsome face turned to him with an inexpressible sweetness and tenderness tremulous upon it. The thought woke in him vaguely, even in that moment, Had this woman loved him? She, swift to read unspoken thoughts, guessed it.

"Do not think that," she said, with a smile of infinite sadness. "I never loved you; it is very long since *my* heart beat. But I would serve you anyhow,—anywhere,—if I could. Do you remember being with me at an opera-supper at the Maison Dorée, years and years ago? No! how should you? It was only memorable to me. Some German prince gave the supper,—who I forget now; but there were women present with whom even I abhorred association. The jests were very free, the license very unchecked, and I—I had forfeited the right to *resent*.

You alone noticed it,—you alone pitied me; you went and spoke in a whisper to the prince. He laughed aloud. 'The Lennox, who is she to——' You silenced him. 'She was at least the daughter of a gallant gentleman; that should not be forgotten.' Then you came to me with your gentle courtesy, and offered to take me to my carriage. Ah! I was wrong to say I never loved you. I loved you *then!* I never forgot it,—I never shall."

Chandos looked at her with a great gratitude, and yet a pain wellnigh as great; tenderness shown him subdued and touched him as it subdues and touches a woman.

"God knows it was trifle enough. If others remembered as you do——"

He paused; no words ever escaped him that could sound like a lament for the ingratitude that had forsaken him on every side.

"Ah," she said, passionately, "it was no trifle to *me*. If ever I can repay it—if it be twenty years hence—I will, let the payment cost what it may."

The promise was very hurried and broken in its utterance for the most fluent and most eloquent woman of her time. She took his hands and bent over them.

"If you could let me serve you!" she murmured, as softly as his mother could have breathed him her farewell; then, with a long, loving gaze, she left him, the black and scarlet hues of her draperies lost in the gloom of the fire-shadows. She could have stayed with him, stayed with him willingly, to aid, to tend on, to assist him with every ministry that love, with which no touch of passion blent, could give; but she knew him to be very proud; she saw that pride was not dead, but lived in passionate pain beneath calamity; she felt that the fewer eyes there were upon him now, the better could he bear the knowledge that they had found him, a homeless

wanderer, dying in the streets of Paris. So, true to her unselfish instinct, and guided by a tenderness higher than compassion, she left him,—she whom the world called an adventuress, without pity and without conscience.

As she passed from the chamber, he sank down wearily and faintly, his head bowed on his breast, his limbs stretched out in racking misery from cold and stiffness in the heat of the leaping flames. He, who in his superb completeness of strength and of health had never known what the illness of a day was, suffered now every ill of mind and body,—suffered almost more in this moment, when the reviving warmth and the stimulant of the choicer food gave him the power of vivid consciousness, than he had done in the stupor of his opium-drugged senses. Yet no word, scarcely any sign, escaped him of what he suffered; there was too proud an instinct in him still. Lulli watched him silently; the dog nestled close in the light of the hearth. For many moments there was not a sound in the chamber; sheer physical aching pain wore Chandos down, seeming to load him with the weight of iron chains, to burn him with the scorch of fire. He wished—he wished to God—that they had left him in that dreamless slumber upon the snow to die, with no more knowledge of the life he quitted than the frozen stag that stretches out its stiffened limbs upon some desolate moor-side.

Gradually, slowly, bodily exhaustion conquered; the pangs that racked his frame were soothed to comparative peace by the after-action of the opiates he had so long taken; the warmth of the hearth lulled him to rest; his eyes closed, his breathing grew gentler and more even; he stretched himself out with a weary sigh, as he had done in the darkness of the streets, and he slept at last as he had never slept since the night he learned the

story of his ruin,—slept for hour on hour, with scarce a breath that stirred the stillness of his repose or could be heard upon the silence. That sleep saved him from the fate which the girl in the gaming-den had foreseen for him if he lived.

When he awoke the sun was high in the western skies; it was far after noon. Lulli sat beside him, watching with a patience no length of vigil could exhaust; the dog lay asleep; the ruddy glow of the great fire on the hearth was dying down, though its intense heat still filled the chamber. His eyes, as they unclosed, met Lulli's resting on him with that unwearied spaniel look which had scarce ever relaxed its watch over that repose which so resembled death.

"Is it you, Guido?" he asked, faintly. "Ah, yes, I remember. And you have been waiting by me there so many hours!"

The Provençal strove to smile, though the tears stood thick in his eyes.

"Monseigneur, I would never weary of *that*."

"I know. There are few like you."

"Monseigneur, if all those whom you once served were like me, there would be many throngs."

Chandos answered nothing; he raised himself on his left arm, and lay on the hearth, gazing at the flicker of the crimson flame, at the fall of the gray noiseless ash.

The deadliest pang to Richard Plantagenet, in all the bitterness of his discrowned fortunes, was when his hound, who loved him, who caressed him, who had been fed from his hand, and had slept by his pillow, went from him to fawn on Bolingbroke. "*Il vous suivra, il m'élignera,*" said the forsaken king,—a whole history of infidelity in the brief pathetic words. The deadliest pang of his lost royalties to Chandos lay in the abandonment of all, save

this poor cripple, whom he had loved and saved, and who had caressed him in the days of his purple and his power.

"You can tell me," he said suddenly,—his voice was very hushed, and came with effort through his lips,—  
"what is the fate of—of——"

"Clarencieux?"

He bent his head.

The musician looked at him eagerly.

"Did you not know? Monseigneur d'Orvâle has bought the whole."

Chandos looked up, a flush of breathless gratitude, of incredulous relief, banishing for the moment all the broken, aged, colourless pain from his face.

"Is it true? Philippe d'Orvâle?"

"Would I cheat you? True as that we live. He forced them to surrender it to him,—bought it untouched, undespoiled."

"Thank God!"

He covered his face with his hands, and for the only time in all his adversity, save the moment when old Harold Gelart had spoken under the elms of the western terrace, great storm-drops forced themselves through his closed lids and his clenched fingers, and fell one by one, like the rain before a tempest.

Far more to him than any mercy to himself was the mercy which had saved Clarencieux from sacrilege, and barter, and destruction.

"Monseigneur d'Orvâle has it," pursued the swift sweet voice of the Provençal. "Not a tree will be touched, not a thing be displaced. He sent for me, and bade me live there; but I could not: it would have broken my heart. He has sought for you everywhere; he has longed

to find you; he would have you return to it as though it were your own still."

Chandos shivered where he sat.

"*I!* I am dead to it for ever."

He could not have borne to look upon the purple distance of its woods, he could not have borne to stand beside the far-off course of the mere river that flowed towards it,—he who had forfeited his birthright.

Lulli was silent; his eyes watched ever, with a dog-like love, the form of Chandos, where he lay at length in the dying glow of the flames, his face hidden, his frame shaken now and then with an irrepressible shudder. An unutterable thanksgiving was in his heart for the fate which had spared his home and his lands from the shame and ruin of dissolution; yet the knowledge that another dwelt there, that another had bought his heritage for ever, brought in him, as it had never come before, the full realisation of his own eternal exile.

He raised his head after many moments, and strove to steady his voice.

"Thank him from me; he will know *how* I thank him. I used to feel how true, how generous, his heart was, how noble a friend he would ever be. Tell him he is merciful beyond men's mercy——"

"*You* will tell him?" asked Lulli, softly: "you will see him? He loves you so well."

Chandos gave an irrepressible gesture of pain.

"Not yet; not yet," he said, hurriedly. "I doubt if ever——"

The words were unfinished; in his own soul he felt as though never could he force himself to look on the friends and companions of that lost life which seemed to lie so far behind him in a limitless distance, dead and past for ever. Nor in himself did he think that he would

long live,—long bear this burden of hopeless wretchedness,—long endure this existence which was unceasingly upon the verge of madness or of death.

What had he now? The food that he ate here might be the last ever to pass his lips. He had not a farthing wherewith to buy bread even for his dog.

Lulli looked at him wistfully, and stooped forward nearer, a kindling light on his face.

"Monseigneur, hear me! When I was dying, you saved me; when I was in beggary, you gave me food and shelter; when I was poor, and friendless, and alone, you were the world to me. You found me in misery, and pitied me; and for the art that is my life and my soul you gained me hearing and you gave me fame. Through you I am no more poor; they talk of me; my *Ariadne* has been heard through all the width of Europe, and they have paid her beauty with their gold, though *that* was never my thought with her. Listen! Pay my debt to you I never can; I love to owe it and to cherish it. But in some little sense I may serve you; in some degree you can make me happy by letting me ask you to remember it. Stay with me; let me toil for you, labour for you, wait on you, gather the gold they offer me for you. It will be such joy to me! Without the sound of your voice, I am like a blind man lost in this wide world; if you will only wait with me, you can give me back strength, power, ambition, everything, and I shall love the coins that I hate now, if you will let me glean them all for you, let me do for you in some little kind all that you did for me when I was a homeless cripple, dying, with all the music that was in me killed and silenced by my hunger and my poverty."

His voice rose in his impassioned entreaty, till it thrilled through the still chamber like one of his own



melodies; he would have slaved, have starved, have killed himself, to have saved or served the man who had had pity on his youth.

Chandos heard, and the words moved him deeply as the words of the old yeoman had done. He never lifted his head, but he stretched out his right hand silently, and grasped the frail, nervous, transparent hand of the musician in a close clasp.

"What you wish cannot be," he said, huskily. "I should be lost to shame indeed! But from my heart I bless you for your fidelity—for your love."

"Cannot be? Why not? In *my* need you aided me," pleaded Lulli, his wistful eyes pleading more fervently than his words. He knew too little of the world to know why, in his own sight, Chandos would have felt himself shamed beyond all humiliation had he listened to his prayer.

The blood flushed his listener's forehead with a pang of the old pride of his proud race; he could not tell this guileless, generous, devoted creature that he would sooner die like a dog, die of famine in the streets, than live on upon the alms of his debtor.

"It cannot be," he said, gently. "Do not ask it, Lulli. If you have fame and comfort, I am more than rewarded by you."

The Provençal's face darkened mournfully; the whole of many months had been passed in a vain quest for his lost master, in an unwearied, though, as it had seemed, hopeless search, through which his sole sustaining thought had been to find his solitary friend and to repay in some faint measure all the gifts he owed.

Chandos rose slowly from where he leaned upon the hearth; his limbs were still stiff and weak, though the profound repose of long-unbroken sleep had restored him

something of strength, and the life-giving warmth in which he had rested had lessened the pain in his brow and eyes and the oppressive weight on his lungs.

"Stay with me! oh, for pity's sake, stay with me!" pleaded Lulli, passionately. So willingly would he have given up everything on earth to be allowed to starve for the only living creature who had ever pitied him.

Chandos gave a faint sign of dissent, he knew not what he should do, he knew not whether in the next day and night he might not perish of the same exposure and want he had been now rescued from, but his highest instincts were not dead in him; he would not linger here, though for one moment physical weakness and all the long habit of physical indulgence came upon him with a fearful longing to lie down and rest without effort in the soothing heat of the hearth, to stay in the lulling peace and shelter of the quiet chamber.

Serious illness was on him, as well as the inertia of fever and of languor. For the moment he felt it beyond his strength to pass out into the bleak biting wind, to face the homeless night, to accept the fate that drove him out into the wilderness of the great city, with none to give him rest, with nothing to buy him food. He longed to turn back, and lie down and die in the dreamy comfort of that calming fire-glow.

But he moved away, only pausing one moment to droop his head to Lulli's ear.

"Tell me, what of *her*?"

The musician turned shuddering away.

"Do not ask me! do not ask me!"

Chandos staggered slightly.

"Is she dead?"

"Would to Heaven she were!" said Lulli, with a force that thrilled for the moment with the fierce venge-

ance of the South. The gentle dreamer, who would have pardoned the cruellest wrongs done to himself, could hate and could avenge where those he loved were wronged.

"Hush! I *have* loved her. What of her? I can bear all *now*."

"She is Lord Clydesmore's wife."

Chandos swayed forward as though about to fall.

"O God! his wife!"

The words broke from him like a wrung-out cry; in that moment he remembered nothing save the passion wherewith he had loved her, save the beauty which was given to another. He made his way with a blind swaying movement towards the door; he had no sense now except that he must be alone,—alone to bear this crowning bitterness which had befallen him.

"Wait!—wait!" cried Lulli, imploringly. "Oh, Heaven! why would you have me tell you? Wait! You will come back to me?"

Chandos put him aside gently, though he had no consciousness of what he did.

"Yes, I will come back," he answered mechanically, without the sense of what he promised, as he made his way out once more into the bitter winter air.

He had forgotten all, except that the one who should now have lain in his arms—his wife—had gone, so soon, to the love and the embrace of another!

### CHAPTER III.

#### In the Net of the Retiarius.

LULLI looked for him in vain. He never returned. It was not that he broke wittingly his promise; he never knew that he had made it.

He dragged his limbs, how he could not have remembered, to the only home he owned now,—a pent, dark, dreary chamber in one of the million houses of the crowded streets. There he lay prostrate many days, many nights, with no watcher beside him save the dog, except once in several hours, when the woman of the house came and filled afresh the flagon of water that he drank from eagerly, and looked at him with a pitying wonder, rather for his beauty than for his danger, and went away and left him; for she only knew him as a beggared gamester, and would have turned him, half lifeless, wholly senseless, into the streets, had it not been that, woman like, she was moved to compassion by the physical graces that no ruin could kill in him, and that touched her to pity as he lay unconscious there.

“As handsome as a fallen angel!” she would mutter to herself, while, though but an old, bent, savage, avaricious crone, she would just touch softly with her yellow horny hand the gold locks that women had used to crown with roses. “An aristocrat! an aristocrat! *Mort de Dieu!* how many of them I have seen die off like murrained cattle from their gaming-hells!”

So, just for the sake of his fair hair and his beautiful mouth, like the mouth of a Greek god, she tended him enough to keep life in him like a flickering flame; for the rest, he lay alone in the midst of the peopled city, where he had once reigned supreme, dying in his solitude for aught that any knew or cared. The winter stars shone clear through frosty nights, and looked in on him prostrate there, with his head fallen back, and his eyes without light or sense, and his chest rising heavily and wearily with anguish in every breath the inflamed lungs drew; while the dog watched beside him, moaning now and again its piteous wail, or covering with its caresses

the clenched hands and the contracted brow. Winter dawns broke chill and gray; winter days rolled darkly on; winter nights passed with riotous storm or frost so crystal clear, through which the cold moon shone like a shield of steel; he lay there in his loneliness as though in his grave, forgotten, and without a friend in the midst of thousands who had feasted at his tables, in the heart of palaces where his word had been as law. Yet the life in him would not die.

It survived through all; it recovered without aid, without succour, without other comfort than was given him by the warmth of the animal's nestling body and the cooling draught of the icy water. Whilst he lay there, one only, beside the old brown withered crone who tended his wants in the few intervals of her daily toil, came and watched him. One only of all those who had known him and been succoured by him discovered the wretchedness of that last retreat, and stood beside the bed where he was stretched. Hate is swifter of foot and surer of chase than love, and will remember and search, untiring, when love has grown weary and laggard.

One only came and mounted the narrow, dark, rickety stairs, and entered the room where there was no single thing of solace or of mercy except when the clear pale light of the stars shone down from above the endless roofs; one only stood beside the pallet where the man whom all Europe had caressed and honoured had no watcher but a starving dog. Trevenna stood there looking on his work, and was content with it. Philippe d'Orvâle had baffled him of his vengeance on the senseless stones of Clarencieux, but none could take from him his vengeance on the living man whom his patient hate had slain more mercilessly than by a swift and single death-stab.

All the years of subtle dissimulation, of carking envy, of longing thirst to destroy the peace and the brilliance of the life he pursued, of gifts accepted with greed because they were the means of conquest, but loathed and cursed and adding by each one a stone to the load of his hatred—all these were over and over recompensed now, here, in this darkened, poverty-bared garret in the city of Paris, where his prey, in torture and in famine, lay insensible beneath his gaze.

Of all the women who had listened to Chandos' love-words and toyed with the brightness of his hair, there was not one who now held a stoup of water to his lips. Of all the hands that he had filled with gold, there was not one now to touch with pitying caress the brow all bent and dark with pain. Of all the mouths to which he had given food, there was not one now to murmur a gentle word over his misery. Of all the throngs whom he had bidden beneath his roof, of all the lives he had made prosperous and joyous, of all the friends who had laughed with him through the long luxuriant summer day of his existence, there was not one now who asked whether he were living or dead. There was but his enemy, who looked on him and rejoiced.

Every unconscious sigh that broke from him, every movement of his fevered aching limbs, every breath drawn through his agonized lungs, every contraction that knit his burning forehead in his suffering, every look of dull sightless suffering from the blind and sleepless eyes, his foe watched, and was content.

Quand j'émiettait mon pain à l'oiseau du rivage,  
L'onde semblait me dire, "Espère ! aux mauvais jours,  
Dieu te rendra ton pain." Dieu me le doit toujours !

wrote the poet Moreau, dying in his youth of lack of the food dogs rejected. Chandos had thrown his bread on

many waters, giving to all who asked, to all who were heavy-laden, to all who lived in darkness and in want. It was unrecompensed and owing to him still. He needed it now, but none repaid it. There only remained with him his foe, who brought him the hyssop and the aloe when he died for a drop of the clear living rivers of the land he had left.

"Water!—water!" he murmured, unceasingly, where he was stretched in his delirious stupor. Trevenna poured some absinthe, and touched his lips with it. He shuddered, all unconscious as he was, and turned with a heavy gasping sigh from the loathsome drink, so bitter, so abhorrent to the fever-burnt, dry lips that longed to steep themselves for ever in the cool flow of sweet, fresh waters. Trevenna smiled.

"Beau seigneur!" he said, softly, to himself, "*I* have drunk bitterness long; it is your turn now."

He lay insensible, defenceless; the width of his chest was bare, and the loud, panting, inflamed beatings of his heart could be seen where it throbbed like the passionate, aching heart of a mured eagle. Trevenna laid his hand on it, and his eye glanced to a knife that lay on the deal board on which his pitcher of drink was set.

"How easy!" he thought. "But I have done better. I have killed him; but I have never broken a law. A stab there would be mercy to him; he shall never get it from me."

Chandos' arm moved where it hung over the bed, seeking instinctively, all dead to what passed or what looked on him though he was, the place whence he was used to take the cup of water which the woman of the house set by him. For the sake of his beauty, she had been pitiful in the last hour, and had sliced in it a few cuts of orange. His hand wandered in a pathetic uncer-

tainty, seeking, as a blind man's seeks, the only thing he had life left in him to long for. Trevenna moved the table from his reach, and emptied out upon the floor the orange-water.

The thirst, parched and delirious as the thirst of men in the desert, consumed his victim with an intolerable torment; his mouth was white and dry as dust, his forehead red with the heated blood, his eyes wide open with a terrible senseless stare: thrown back there, with his bare chest grand as the chest of a Torso, and the luxuriance of his hair tangled and tossed and lustreless, yet retaining the beauty with which nature had created him deathless to the last, he lay like a young gladiator flung down in the sand of the arena by the clinging serpentine coils of the Retiarius. Indistinct, disconnected words broke now and then from his lips, in the wanderings of thoughts that in the misery of that thirst stretched far away into dim memories of his past,—to the forest freshness of English brooks, to the deep still blue of Austrian lakes, to the sweet music of waters falling through innumerable leaves down the steep height of many-coloured stone, of the grand breadth of Euphrates rolling beneath its palms, of the silver-sheeted Danube lying in the deep shadows of its woods, of the stilly murmur of winding waters in the Italian spring-tide leaf, flowing lazily and softly beneath the green wild arums, and the tawny beds of osiers, and the wreathing boughs of Banksia roses, and the gentle fragrance of the young vine's flower-buds. They were on his lips ever, in longing, fugitive, broken memories, those scenes and hours of his past, those thoughts of the earth's fair freshness that was dead and lost to him.

Trevenna stood still and listened to the unconscious, unbidden suffering that longed for all that it was exiled



from, that spoke in those broken words of all the glories of remembered hours, all the freedom of the forests and the seas, while life was wrung and death embittered by that one poor piteous want,—one draught of the water that beggars might drink from every brook that bubbled. He listened; he could have listened for ever.

He thought of the night when he had ground the Paris sweetmeats into the mud of the gutter, and registered his childish vow; he had kept it to the letter. Happier than Shylock, he had cut the piece of his vengeance from the living heart of his victim, with none to stay his hand.

The gray chilly twilight of a winter's day filled the attic; the light of the first faint moon-ray glistened on the bare walls and the naked floor; the noise, the stench, the noxious reeking air of the alley below could reach but little here; only an oath, or a laugh more ghastly than the oath, pierced the stillness of this chamber in the roof, while through its broken casement the tide of the icy night-wind poured bitterly in on the uncovered chest, on the fevered limbs, on the darkened aching brow.

There was no pang of conscience in the watcher there,—no memory of the friendship that had trusted, of the loyalty that had saved him,—no thought of his own fraud, of his own baseness. He only remembered what this man had been in the splendour of his promise, in the gladness of his youth, in the brilliance of his renown, and looked at him lying thus, and was content. When the net had wound its coils, and the strangled limbs were powerless, and the strength reeled and fell under its twisting, writhing meshes down into the sand, the Retiarius had no pity, but he looked upward to where the shouts of "Euge!" and the turned-down hands decreed with him no mercy to the vanquished, and he plunged in

again and again the fangs of his trident, seeking the last life-blood. So it was now with Trevenna. His net had been deftly flung, and had brought his adversary down, blinded and paralyzed; but he would never have wearied of stabbing again and again, while there was life to feel.

He turned reluctantly away: he could have lingered there whilst there was a pang to watch, a sigh to count. He heard the footfall of the old Auvergnat woman heavily treading over the bare boards. She touched his arm,—a hideous, brown, wrinkled, shrivelled being of nigh eighty years, with avarice in her black glance, and a horrible old age upon her.

"You know him?" she asked.

"I know a little of him," he answered, indifferently. "You had better not keep him here longer than you can help; he may get you into trouble."

He roused her fears and her selfishness, that even this miserable hand might be withheld from easing the suffering they looked on. The Auvergnat looked at him in terror.

"With the police?"

Trevenna nodded and shrugged his shoulders. The old creature, steeped in Paris vice and devoured with Paris avarice, set her teeth hard.

"By the Mother of God! I would have turned him in the streets days ago if he were not as beautiful as a marble Christ."

Trevenna laughed,—a loud, coarse, jeering laugh.

"His beauty! You old crone, what can that be to you? If you were twenty, now——"

She turned on him her darkling and evil glance.

"Women are fools to their tombs. I cannot hurt him; I should see his face for ever."

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders.

"If you wish to serve him, get him let into some pauper madhouse. It is the only thing you can do for him."

She shuddered a dissent.

"They would shear all *that* in a madhouse!" she said, drawing through her hard withered hands the silken fairness of his hair. "When I was young, I would have given my life to kiss that gold,—when I was young!"

The words muttered half sullenly, half longingly, on her lips; the memory made her touch gently, almost tenderly, the locks that lay in her horny palm. She felt for him,—almost, in a way, she loved him,—this battered, evil, savage old creature of Paris; but she would strip the linen from his limbs to thief and sell, for all that.

"Send him there all the same," said Trevenna. "It is the only place that will shelter him now; except one, to be sure,—the Morgue!"

And with these last words to rankle and fester, and ripen if they should, in the soul of the old beldam who had all to lose, nothing to gain, by the life of one whom she had robbed of every thing, Trevenna went lightly down the high crazy staircase that passed through so many stories to the basement; there was a more intensely victorious glance in his eyes, a smile of tenfold success on his mouth.

And he went out into the night, leaving the man who had rescued him from his prison to perish of thirst, or of famine, or of fever,—to die in the streets, or to live like a chained beast in a madhouse,—whichever should chance to be the fruit and the end of his history.

Trevenna never laughed more merrily at the vaudeville of the Bouffes, never ate his salad with keener relish at the Café Riche, never looked on at Mabilie with more good-tempered indulgence for the follies which had no attraction for himself, than he did that night. Once he

laughed aloud, so gaily, so long, that a friend near asked what the jest was. He laughed again.

"I am thinking of Belisarius begging an obole; and of Henry IV. hunted and naked, and dead of starvation, at Spire!"

His friend stared, and thought the wine was in his head. But it was not; he was only drunk with success.

The doom of his prey, however, then at least, was not the madhouse or the grave. He rose from his bed at length, the superb frame with which nature had dowered him resisting all the stress and peril that had sought to undermine it. He wondered wearily why he *could* not die.

The woman who had brought him drink and tended him now and then, for the sake of those lips like the Sun-God's, of those limbs like the Antique, had robbed him of the little he had left while he lay insensible. She said, when he could hear, that she had been at great cost for his illness: he believed her; he could not tell that her pitcher of water had been the sole thing set by his side.

Having lost what he had lost, moreover, what could the few things stolen now be to him?

Thus, when he rose at last and staggered out from the wretched dwelling where he had not a coin left to keep even its roof above his head, he was literally beggared, —beggared almost as utterly as any unknown corpse that lay waiting burial in the dead-house by the Seine.

Since the far-gone German days, when an emperor vainly begged bread at the Church he had endowed, and dragged himself to a vault to die unsepulchred, there had hardly been a fall more vast, more sudden, from the height of power to the depths of poverty.

He went feebly out into the early night, that by a chance was clear, starlit, and mild. Beau Sire looked up at him and moaned; a piteous hunger gazed out from the

dog's eyes: he was famished; he had well-nigh starved through all the days and nights that he had kept guard by his master. He had not a sou left him to buy the animal food.

He shuddered as he met the wistful, uncomplaining, hungry eyes,—he who had never beheld pain save to relieve or to release it!

He almost reeled through the first street that his steps turned into; illness had mortally weakened him, and his head swam with the booming noise of the traffic, and with the stench of the crowds. The retriever followed him feebly: famine was telling on its strength; and, like its master, used to all luxury and to all delicacies for so long, it was untrained to want: its eyes were growing dim and ravenous.

Chandos sank down almost unconsciously on some stone steps of the narrow thoroughfare he had wandered into, and drew the dog to him with its fond head nestled in his breast; he could not bear the mute appeal of those longing, piteous eyes. The crowds swept past him,—rich and poor, chiefly the latter, for it was in a densely-peopled and ancient quarter, but all bent fast on their own errands. Two or three turned their heads back over their shoulders to look at him, with his arm resting on the shoulders of the animal that pressed so closely to him; none did more. They were the hurried pleasure-seekers and the toiling labourers of a great city; they could have no heed of *one* misery amidst so vast a canker of universal want and greed.

The throngs passed him like a throng of phantoms; he thought, as he sat there, of the thousand nights when he had driven through Paris with all the rank, with all the brilliance, of the Court of St. Cloud around him, with no name more famous, with no presence more courted, at Tuileries or Faubourg, than his own.

Now he must let his dog hunger for a broken loaf!

Where he sat, the lamp-light flashed on the collar the retriever wore,—a handsome toy of silver, with his arms embossed upon it,—a relic of his long-lost life. His hand wandered to the padlock fastening it: how many hours it recalled to him that burnished glittering ornament where it gleamed under the dog's black curls!—hours of fresh autumn mornings among the woods of Clarencieux; of breezy Scottish days, with the splash of the cool brown water, and the flush of a snow-white swan, and the balmy honey-smell of the heather; of glowing deep-hued Eastern sunsets, where the reeds of the Nile trembled in the after-glow, or the curling flight of the desert-hawk soared upward above the ruins of the temples of Jupiter Ammon;—hours when the days and the nights were all too brief for the glad luxuriance of the “life he was gifted and filled with.”

Then he unfastened the collar, and rose and crossed the street to a small dark house where he saw that things were pawned,—a minor, obscure *Mont de Piété*. He entered and laid the toy down.

“Take it,” he said, faintly, yet with a new, strange fierceness in the words,—the fierceness that comes with the gnawing of want; “take it, and give me food for the dog.”

The owner of the wretched place stared at him, and balanced the collar thoughtfully in his hands, amazed at the richness and the workmanship of the thing offered him.

“It is of value,—of great value,” he muttered.

“Give me food for him, and take it.”

The words were very low, but there was something of menace in them. The man, old and, though avaricious, not dishonest, for his trade, glanced half frightened at their speaker, and, keeping the collar in his hand, stooped under his dirty counter, and drew out a plate of his own supper,—good food enough, though coarse, and heaped

up in abundance. The retriever devoured it as only starvation can devour.

The pawnbroker watched him with a half-stupid wonder, then took three napoleons from his desk and pushed them towards Chandos.

"Your silver thing is worth more than your dog's meat. Take those."

The collar was worth thirty, as he knew well; he voluntarily gave three. He thought himself stupendously honest; so he was, as the world goes.

Chandos drew back with an involuntary gesture of repulsion. Want had not killed in him yet the impulses of his blood; then, as the colour faded, leaving him deadly pale, he stretched out his hand and took it. It would keep life in him for another week.

"I thank you," he said, simply, as he bowed with his old courtly grace to the man who with wide-open eyes watched him with a fascinated amaze.

"*Mon Dieu!*" murmured the pawnbroker, as he turned to leave the place,—"*mon Dieu!* how strange a man! He wants food for a dog, and he bows like a king. Well, I gave him three, I gave him three; I almost wish I had given him more."

Still, even as it was, he felt by that voluntary gift of three he had been virtuous enough. There are many in higher trades than he who consider that to abstain for a little part from all the cheating they have it in their power to do, is to attain a high degree of social and commercial honesty.

Chandos turned to pass from the place. In the entrance stood Trevenna.

Well clothed in dark warm seal-skins that hung lightly on him, with his ruddy colour brighter, his white teeth whiter, and his keen, frank eyes bluer in the winter air

and glancing gaslight, he stood in an easy comfort, in a traveller's carelessness; and on his mouth was a lurking smile,—a smile of irrepressible amusement, of ironic triumph. He had watched Chandos many a time in the gambling-hell, in the midnight streets, in the opium-drunkenness, before he had stood and looked at him where he lay insensible on what seemed his death-bed. He had seldom lost sight of him; he had been the only one who remembered him; for hate is more enduring than any love. But now only for the first time Chandos knew that his gaze was on him,—now when the hazard of accident had made his bitterest enemy pause at the door of the pawnshop and look on at the barter of the silver toy.

And not in the first instant when Chandos turned and saw him could he wholly hide the caustic mockery, the victorious success, with which he had watched this last depth of hopeless misery into which the man he had pursued had fallen; not in that moment of supreme domination over his fallen friend could he resist the impulse that beset the single weakness lurking in his bright, bold nature,—the weakness of an insatiable and woman-like avidity of hate.

He stretched out his hand with his old ready, pleasant smile; the palm was filled with some ten or dozen sovereigns and a few crisp bank-notes just won at the whist-tables of the Jockey Club.

"*Très-cher!* when we last met, you used me rather roughly because I offended you with a bit of common sense; the direst insult to you men of genius. But let bygones be bygones. Take what you want, Chandos; you did the same for me once. Take 'em all: do, now. You won't believe how, from my soul, I pity you. Pawned the dog's collar?—oh, the deuce! Is it so bad as that?



You look as if you wanted food yourself; why didn't you write to me? I'm a poor man, as you know; but still a five-pound note——"

He knew so well how to pierce with the cruellest strokes the most sensitive nerves of the nature he had studied so long and so minutely. The words might have passed on a stranger's ear as kindly meant, though coarsely phrased; he knew how more bitter than all taunts, more unbearable than all outrage, would they be to the man who stood before him.

He was not prepared for their effect.

Chandos looked at him a moment in silence, then dashed his hand down with his own clenched fist in a sudden blow that scattered in the mud the coins and notes.

"Take care! or you shall have the same on your jibing lips."

The menace was low-breathed, but it thrilled with a fierce intensity of suppressed passion. Trevenna had not calculated or remembered the change that wretchedness and desperation work in the gentlest natures; he had never thought how the softest and most pliant temper, goaded by indignity and altered by circumstance, will turn at last ferocious, like a wild boar at bay.

He stooped, amazed and for the instant speechless, and picked up the scattered money from the doorstep and the street (Trevenna never wasted anything; it was one of the secrets of his success); then he looked up with the insolence of superiority, the coarseness of triumph, that he could no more have spared to the man before him than the hound will spare the stag he has pulled down the gripe of his fangs, the wrench of his jaws.

"On my honour, monseigneur, we can't stand that style now, you know. You've lost your head, that's what

it is, with gaming, and drinking, and going to the bad. I'm deuced sorry for you, on my word I am——"

Chandos's hand fell with a swaying weight upon his shoulder and forced him back off the step, off the stones. Under the goad of his foe's insults, under the taunting pity of the man he had saved and enriched, all the weakness of illness, all the dizziness of exhaustion, seemed to leave him; he felt as though the force of lions flowed back into his veins.

"Come out—into some lonely place," he muttered in Trevenna's ear. "Come quietly, or I shall find strength to kill you still."

Trevenna turned passively down a solitary, gloomy, unlighted court of a dreary uninhabited fifteenth-century hotel, not far from the Tourelle de la Reine Isabeau, in the ancient Rue du Temple, where the darling of Paris was struck down by the assassins of his foe of Burgundy.

Chandos had never released his grasp upon his shoulder; he forced him slowly on and backward into the darkness of the stone-paved court. Once alone there, in that gaunt black silence, he released him.

"Now tell me why you hate me!"

The words were distinctly uttered, and were not loud; yet for the moment of their utterance, as he had done once before, Trevenna felt very near his death. But he was a bold man; he did not quail; he laughed audaciously.

"Why do I hate you? What a question! In the first place, you can't know I do."

Chandos took a step nearer to him.

"No lies! Why do you triumph in my ruin? How have I ever wronged you?"

Trevenna laughed again; his temper was up for once, his savage hatred had got the better of him, his caution was forgotten in the irresistible delight of flinging off the

disguise he had worn so long, and taunting and cursing his fallen antagonist openly while he was powerless; even as yonder, under the House of the Image of Our Lady, the boar of Burgundy had commanded the "*coup de massue*" to the fair lifeless body that his brute envy had slaughtered in its youth.

"I have no title to aspire;  
Yet if you sink, I seem the higher,"

he chanted, with a malicious humour. "That couplet is true to the core. Triumph? I don't triumph. I only offer to lend you a five-pound note; and you look deucedly as if you wanted it. Of course there's something droll in such a fall as yours. I can't help that. To think of all you used to be and all you are! The see-saw of Fortune was never half so strikingly illustrated since the days of Croesus."

There was very little light where they stood, none save such as the winter moon shed, but there was enough for him to see the face above him, and the words stopped abruptly even on his fearless lips.

He knew that for far less provocation than this blood had been shed a million times since the days of Cain.

"Answer me," said Chandos,—and there was a menace in the patient words more deadly than lies in passion; "answer me. *Why* do you hate me as devils hate?"

"Can't say how devils hate! Don't believe in 'em," said Trevenna, flippantly. His audacious and insolent temper was dared and roused; though he had died for it, he would not have abandoned his victory. "No more do you. They all say now 'Lucrece,' is a deistical work; a season later, it will be atheistical. Trust public opinion to run all down-hill when once it takes the turn. What

if I do hate you? I'm not singular. No end of men hate you, *mon beau Chandos!*"

Something of the fierce concentrated passion faded from the face on which the white moon shone; a great weariness of pain came there.

"Hate me?" he re-echoed, dreamily. "I never wronged any man, to my own knowledge. Why should men hate me? Why should you?"

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders, and shook his seal-skins with a careless laugh.

"Why? Why, hate's sown broadcast, like so much thistle-down. Why? Perhaps you robbed me of my mistress, or I envied yours. Perhaps you beat me once at *écarté*. Perhaps you only provoked me with your d—d languor of aristocratic hauteur; that did a deal of mischief for you with a good many. Perhaps you incensed me with the very cursed grace of your generousities, with the very royal nonchalance of your liberalities; *that* annoyed more than you wot of, too. Hate? Why, what is there to wonder at in that? If I loved you, now, you *might* think it out of the common!"

And yet, were love won by friendship, loyalty, and gifts, how had he bought this man's! The memory rose in him where he stood, with the goading banter of Trevenna's ironies on his ear; yet there was too grand a fibre in his nature, too proud a chivalry in his blood, for him to smite his torturer with the past of forgotten benefits,—for him to appeal against ingratitude with the rebuke, "*I served you!*"

"You hate me!" he said, slowly. "*You!*"

It was the only utterance of reproach that passed his lips; in it a world was spoken. Though every other living thing had forsaken him, he would have sworn that this man would have been faithful as the dog beside him.

The rebuke, slight as it was, struck such lingering conscience as Trevenna retained, and, with that sense of momentary shame, stung afresh all his greedy triumph, his jeering exultation, his untiring mockery, into their pitiless exercise.

"Well, if I do? What if I do? You'll call me a hound that bites the hand that fed him. Basta! monseigneur; there are some gifts and caresses we can't forgive so soon as we could forgive a kick and a curse. Human nature! You loved human nature; don't you love it now? You were an aristocrat, and I hated aristocrats. *A la lanterne* with every one of 'em. Not but what I'm sorry for you,—deuced sorry for you. I'll try to get you a place, if you'll tell me what you'll fill. There are lots of things they'll give you; the world heartily pities you, you know, though you *were* so imprudent. Besides, if anybody ever hated you, my poor Chandos, they can afford to forget it now. You can't sink lower,—a cleaned-out gamester, a sotted opium-drinker, a beggar in the streets!"

The last words had scarce left his tongue in their insolence of assumed compassion, in their vindictiveness of victorious jibe, when Chandos dashed his hand back on his lips, smiting them to silence, the sole answer that he gave his traitor. His face had changed terribly as he stood and heard; the instinct of vengeance, the instinct to *kill*, had awakened in him; for the moment a very hell of crime was in him.

Trevenna's laughing, sanguine, sun-tanned features turned livid, and set fixed as in a vice; the blow stirred black blood in him. Lightly as a leopard, and as savagely, he sprang forward on the man he hated. For one instant, in the grey gloom of the old lonely court, there was a close-locked struggle; wrong and hate found

their last issue in the sheer animal blood-thirst, the wild-brute, untamed instincts that live latent in all men; the next, the unequal contest ended. Just risen from his sick-bed, weak with long fasting and past illness, fever-worn, and already blind and dizzy with the single exertion of the crashing blow that he had dealt, Chandos reeled over under the fresh strength and supple science of his adversary, and swayed back heavily on the grass-grown stones of the desolate court. The dog, who had wandered away for a moment, sprang back with a lion's bound and a lion's bay as his master fell, rushed at Trevenna, buried deep fangs in his clothes and flesh, tore him with mad fury off Chandos, and stood guard over the senseless and prostrate form; none could have put a hand on it now, and lived.

Chandos lay there as he had done in the frozen night when Guido Lulli had found him, utterly still, utterly senseless. His face was turned upward, and the moon shone on it with a white, cold, clear light.

His foe looked at him, standing much as in the dim centuries of the Moyen Age, a little farther under the shadow of the tower of fair Queen Isabeau, John of Burgundy had once looked on in the evil night at the stone-dead body of the man his jealous, covetous lust of ambitious envy had pursued and hunted down to the death.

He had his victory, so sweet to him that he never felt the blood pour from his shoulder, where the retriever had seized him and dragged him off.

"How easy to kill him now!" he thought. "Bah! only fools break laws. He will be dead soon enough; he is worse than dead now, he can *suffer*. I wish priests' tales were true, and souls could live. I wish his father's could have power to see him as he lies—see the wreck of him and the ruin."

There was a hard, ravenous, gloating longing in the thought that stretched out beyond the grave. Not content with its work on earth, he looked lingeringly, enjoyingly, reluctant to pass away; but it was rare that caution with him could be conquered by passion or desire, and he knew that if he waited a moment more the dog would be at his throat. He looked once more with a smile—a smile of full success—then went out from the still quadrangle leaving the chill moonlight to settle in a broad unbroken space where Chandos lay.

That black shade of the old Rue du Temple had seen many murders since the night when Louis d'Orléans was felled down there as he rode from his tryst with Isabeau; but it had never seen fouler murder than that which John Trevenna had done, though he had held back his hand from the shedding of blood, from the breaking of law.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"Sin shall not have Dominion over you."

THE square court, surrounded with its four blank granite moss-grown walls, with the round pointed towers looming darkly up towards the sky, was wholly forsaken; it was three parts in ruin; no one wandered there save once or twice in the length of the night, when the beat of the patrol's step sounded through it, waking its hollow echoes. It was as still as when, in the mediæval ages, which saw its stones raised, the monks of its brotherhood had flitted ghostlike through its shadows; the pale moon only looked down on it, her spectral swathes of light falling across the leaden gloom of the damp, lichen-covered pavement.

How long he lay there he never knew; hurled back, but swaying over from faintness rather than from injury,

he had fallen in a dead swoon, his head striking the stones with a dull sound that echoed through the silence. The fresh night-air revived him, blowing over his forehead and his eyes. He had been struck down heavily, flung in wrestling by a merciless hand; but there was little sense of pain on him as he woke to the knowledge of where he was and of what had chanced; his bodily weakness had prevented the struggle and the resistance that might have been fatal to him. He looked up at the moon shining so far above, so clear, so bright, so tranquil; life seemed to have faded far away from him, and to have left him in the calmness of the grave.

He rose with difficulty—his limbs felt powerless and broken—and he staggered to an old stone bench hard by, where a shattered fountain-spout slowly let fall a stream of water that ebbed away, glistening and shallow, in the starlight over the squares of the pavement. He stooped, and drank eagerly from it—it was cold and pure—then sank down on the bench. The dog gathered itself close against him; there was no sound of the world without, save the dull roar of the distant night-traffic and the striking of church-clocks upon the stillness: they seemed alone in the heart of Paris—God-forgotten, man-for-saken, in the midst of the peopled world.

In the solemn night, the opium-mists, the brandy-drugged stupor, the delirium of exhaustion, so long on him, passed away; the thoughts of his mind grew clearer, for the first hour since the day of his ruin. An intense agony was on him,—the deep, still, tearless agony of absolute despair. Yet he seemed to look on the ruin of his life as from a burial-place from which he would never rise; to look on and see the world that knew him no more, the love that had abandoned, the friendship that had betrayed him, as one dead, whose sense and soul re-



turned to behold all that he had cherished revile his memory and forget his loss. He had no feeling of present existence; all he knew was that in the world of men he had no place, that in the hearts of the vast multitude of earth he had no remembrance, that he had perished for ever into oblivion when the stroke had smitten him down. There, in the stillness and solemnity of night, all things seemed manifest to him; apart from all that he had once known, he seemed to gaze on it and hear its pitiless course pass on, as a man lying paralyzed watches and listens, having no more part or share with the humanity around him than though his shroud had covered him, having no hand to raise if his cheek be smitten, having no arm to lift if a fool mock his misery, having no lips to speak if a lie make foul mirth of his name; lifeless, and yet among the living; slain, and yet alive to suffer.

This is how it seemed to him that he was now. Breath was in him,—that was all he claimed of life; in every other thing he was a corpse; felled into a grave, whence he heard the jibing laughter of those who jested at his fall, the restless feet of those who passed on and bade him be forgot, the stones flung down on him by the hands he had filled with gifts, the kisses that were welcomed by the cheek his kiss had warmed! He was dead; and as the dead he was abandoned and forgotten.

The beauty that had been his was given to the embrace of another; the caress that had been on his lips now burned as softly on the mouth of his spoiler; the roof that had sheltered him from his birth up covered the sleep and the revel of strangers; the treasures that had owned him master, and been gathered by him from north to south, east to west, were scattered broadcast over the earth; the world that he had led knew him no more, and never named his name; the women who had smiled in

his eyes, and wound their wreathing arms about his neck, let their bright hair brush the bosoms and their pulses thrill to the whispers of newly-wooed lovers; the men whom he had served followed the light of rising suns, and gave no heed to the eternal night that had fallen for him: all that he had loved, all that he had owned, all that he had lost, was gone to make the joy of other hearts: his fate was the fate of the dead.

He was forgotten in his misery, as slaughtered kings are forgotten in their sealed sepulchres; and his sceptre was not even broken, in pity and honour for his name, above his grave, but passed to the hands of those who dethroned him, bringing them his wealth, his crown, his treasures, his lieges.

Of all that he had possessed, of all he had reigned over, he could claim nothing,—not even a heart that had loved him.

He knew the width and the depth of his desolation as he had never known it. The man whom he had fed as utterly as he had fed the dog at his feet, when he had been starving and homeless and friendless, the man whom he had lifted from a foreign prison and served as few serve their own flesh and blood, the man who had been his guest, his debtor, his suppliant for the very bread and wine of his table, had turned against him, had deserted him, had cursed him with a foe's hate; no other thing could have told him how utterly he had sunk, how utterly had the world forsaken him.

This man had flung his scorn at him, and had reviled him with a traitor's pitiless mockery; he knew it was the last depth of his fall, the last and the most infamous witness of his degradation,—as the Plantagenet had known it, when the hound that had been reared by his hand went from him to fawn on the conqueror. -

In the state to which his mind had sunk, in the world-wide wreck that he saw around him, the strangeness of Trevenna's hatred struck him little; he did not muse, as earlier he would have done, on what could be the secret and the spring of this coarse, merciless passion of enmity in one to whom his gifts had been as many as the sands of the sea, and whom he had served more truly than he had served himself. He accepted it with the hopeless apathy that comes with despair: all left him, all changed with his changed fate, all condemned him where all had caressed him: it seemed but of a piece with the rest that the greatest of debtors should bring him as payment the blackest of ingratitude.

In one sense only did the full bitterness and shame of Trevenna's taunts strike home to him: they showed him how low he must have sunk that this man could dare revile him. It was less loathing of his foe that rose in him than it was loathing of himself; it was less hatred of his betrayer's infamy than it was hatred of his own abasement. He shuddered as he thought what adversity already had made him; he dared not think what a brief while more might make him.

A few nights more of the life he had led, and he would have been dead at the Morgue, or raving in a madhouse. The lengthened sleep that had preceded the congestion of the lungs which cold and lack of food produced, had saved him; had stilled the fever in his blood, and freed his reason from the half-drunk phantoms in which it had lost itself, and been broken and blinded for so long. He rose from his wretched bed but the shadow of what he had once been; but the look was gone from his eyes which had made the *fille de joie* in the gaming-den thrust the opium to him, and bid him not live to be what he must be.

Her words came back to him now where he sat, the serene, cool night, through which the stars alone looked, stilling the riot of his mind with the sense of their own eternal calm. "What he must be!" He knew well enough what that was.

A little while more of such a life as he had led since the day of his ruin, of those hideous orgies, of that drunken stupor, of that horrible and ghastly union of poverty and intoxication, of despair and vice, and the lowest creature that crawled through the midnight snows to devour the stray relics of offal that the curs had left would be as high as he; a little more, and every better thing would be crushed out in him, and the vilest den would spurn him from it to die in the river-slime like a choked dog.

Had he embraced dishonour, and accepted the rescue that a lie would have lent him, this misery in its greatest share had never been upon him. He would have come hither with riches about him, and the loveliness he had worshipped would have been his own beyond the touch of any rival's hand. Choosing to cleave to the old creeds of his race, and passing, without a backward glance, into the paths of honour and of justice, it was thus with him now. Verily, virtue must be her own reward, as in the Socratic creed; for she will bring no other dower than peace of conscience in her gift to whosoever weds her. "I have loved justice, and fled from iniquity; wherefore here I die in exile," said Hildebrand upon his death-bed. They will be the closing words of most lives that have followed truth.

What could he be? What could the future, if he lived for one, hold for him? Misery, privation, abandonment, solitude, the ceaseless thirst of vain desires, the unending void of eternal losses, the haunting knowledge of

all he might have been. These were what faced him; these were what alone awaited him. If he lived on, he could but look for these, and for worse yet,—he to whose beauty-steeped senses every passing pain had been unknown, every sight of deformity been veiled! He thought of the old sacred legend of Herodotus,—how, when the Argive mother prayed at the temple of Juno in Argos for the highest blessing that mortals can attain to be bestowed on Cleobis and Bito, her prayer was granted: her sons fell asleep to wake no more. He knew now its terrible truth, its eternal meaning,—he who had thought ten thousand times the span of his rich and shadowless life would be too brief a space to spend on earth! Death;—it would not come to him; and he longed for it as a man in a desert land, shipwrecked amidst the burning wealth of colour and the cruel wantonness of beauty round him, longs for water as he perishes of thirst.

Still yet, even yet, a pulse of life stirred that he could not with his own hand slay; it was the power of the genius in him. Dulled, drugged, stifled, paralyzed, beneath the weight of infinite wretchedness, the frozen apathy of despair, the fever of vice, the pangs of famine, it was not dead, and the taunts of his foe had stung the pride sleeping with it into fresh existence. The insult of his debtor and his traitor had been the crowning agony of his passion; but it brought back life in him, as the plunge of the surgeon's steel will bring it back and cut the cords of death by the very force and suddenness of its stab.

A gentler hand could not have saved him or arrested him; the un pitying and brutal thrusts of his adversary roused him ere it was yet too late.

There, in the silence, in the solitude, with the dark walls brooding above him, and the cold winter's moon

looking down, something of the grandeur of resistance, something of the calm of endurance, came on him. Should this man see him die in a bagnio? point to him as one so womanish weak that the first stroke of calamity had slain him? mock him as a madman, who, having squandered his birthright, flung his manhood and his mind and his soul away with it?

He had been gifted with such a genius as was in Alcibiades when he listened in love to the golden words of his master, or heard the shouts of the people give him to triumph as his chariot-wheels crushed the wild thyme they threw. Should he perish, like Alcibiades, in the arms of a courtesan, lost to all that earlier and holier time? A greater inheritance than that which he had squandered had been given him in his intellect; a greater suicide than that of the body would be the suicide that now was destroying the mind with which nature had dowered him.

Freedom was left him, and intellect,—the two first treasures of life; whilst the powers of his brain were still his, and his liberty, the poet would have said,—

“Then first of the mighty, thank God that thou art.”

There are liberties sweeter than love; there are goals higher than happiness.

Some memory of them stirred in him there, with the noiseless flow of the lingering water at his feet, and above the quiet of the stars; the thoughts of his youth came back to him, and his heart ached with their longing.

Out of the salt depths of their calamity men had gathered the heroisms of their future; out of the desert of their exile they had learned the power to return as conquerors. The greater things within him awakened from their lethargy; the innate strength so long untried, so

long lulled to dreamy indolence and rest, uncoiled from its prostration; the force that would resist and, it might be, survive, slowly came upon him, with the taunts of his foe. It was possible that there was that still in him which might be grander and truer to the ambitions of his imaginative childhood under adversity, than in the voluptuous sweetness of his rich and careless life. It was possible, if—if he could once meet the fate he shuddered from, once look at the bitterness of the life that waited for him, and enter on its desolate and arid waste without going back to the closed gates of his forfeited paradise to stretch his limbs within their shadow once more ere he died.

There is more courage needed oftentimes to accept the onward flow of existence, bitter as the waters of Marah, black and narrow as the channel of Jordan, than there is ever needed to bow down the neck to the sweep of the death-angel's sword.

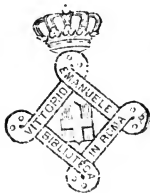
He rose slowly and looked upward; the hours had fled, the city was sleeping, the busy feet of the crowds were silent, and the hush of an intense rest was on the world around him. Beneath it vice might yet riot and misery still moan; but it was towards dawn, and the noiseless peace was unbroken; the trembling rays of moonlight shivered on the water's surface, and far above, shining from the deep, blue-black, fathomless vault, the lustre of the stars burned through the brilliancy of winter air,—a myriad worlds uncounted and unknown. Men had abandoned and hope forsaken him; on the earth he had no place, and in human love no memory; but there, under their solemn light, their own tranquillity encompassed him; solitude lost its desolation in the eternity and the immensity of that limitless space, of that unknown deity.

A lifetime suffered here,—what was it? the span of a single day in those bright worlds beyond the sun. In

face of that changeless and endless calm, the burden of so brief a labour might well be borne; sufficient if through travail the faintest shadow of likeness unto truth were gained. To many in their suffering that unalterable and eternal serenity of nature is pitiless, is unendurable; they find no mercy in it, no shelter, and no aid; to him it was divine as consolation, divine with the majesty of God. Above the fret and vice and wretchedness of earth it brooded so still, so cold; it stretched so boundless and so deathless out into the infinite realms of space!—from it there seemed to breathe the promise of a future when men should live “sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed;” from it there seemed to steal the bidding, “Let the world abandon you, but to yourself be true.”

Though he had lost all, there were with him still the dreams of his youth; the world forsook him, and the width of the earth stretched before him,—a desert laid waste, barren and pitiless as stone, through which he must pass, wearily and in solitude, to live and to die alone; yet he arose with his dead strength revived, with the calm of a passionless endurance fallen on him.

He accepted the desolation of his life, for the sake of all beyond life, greater than life, which looked down on him from the silence of the night.



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